

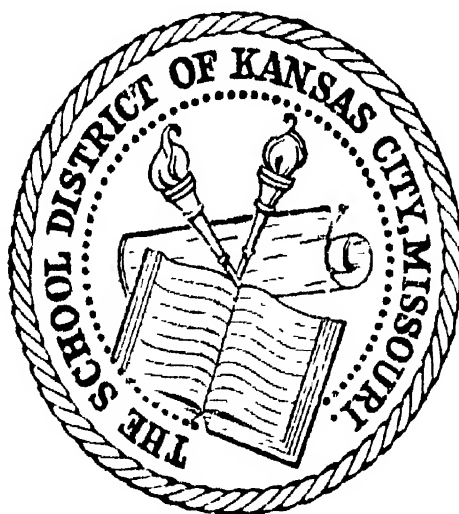
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# ENGLISH LITERATURE

AN ILLUSTRATED RECORD

BY

RICHARD GARNETT, C.B., LL.D.

AND

EDMUND GOSSE, M.A., LL.D.

VOLUMES I and II



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Of podes, than ye han had before  
 Comprehendes in this lital tretys here  
 To enforce Wyth theffat of uny matere  
 And though I nat the cause wodes  
 As ye han had, yet to yow alle I prey  
 Wlouth me nat for as in uny oother  
 Shul ye noother fynden difference  
 Fro the oother, of this tretys lhte  
 After the Wyth this uny tale  
 And therfore I prayeth yow that  
 And lat me tellen, al uny tale I prey

Explicit

These begynnet Chaucer



A yong man calles wel  
 Up on his Wyf that  
 Which that calles was  
 He for his desport is  
 His Wyf and ceo his doghter hath he  
 the dores weryn faste yssene thre or  
 And oother laddres to the Galles of  
 been entred And betten his Wyf  
 fyue mortal woundes in fyue corse  
 hyr feet in hyr handes in hyr eyes  
 And lesen hyr fox deeo And wenter  
 tongues was in to his hous and car  
 ued man yerynge his clothes ga  
 re his Wyf as for forth as she doghter  
 for to obyte but nat for thy he ga  
 the woore This noble Wyf consey  
 centente of wode niths boof nat

Quodrus de iuniorio uiuozis...

Equestrian Portrait of Chaucer.

[Illesmere Chaucer, Bridgewater House]



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FROM THE BEGINNINGS TO THE  
AGE OF MILTON

BY

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NEW EDITION  
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Reference



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## PUBLISHER'S INTRODUCTION

*THE design of the publisher of this work has been to produce a book which shall stimulate and gratify curiosity concerning the leading authors of our country and the evolution of its literary history. This curiosity is not to be confined within the limits of an acquaintance with a few dry manuals. It appeals to the eye as well as to the ear, and as the reader becomes attracted to the writings of this or that writer, and feels his enthusiasm enkindled, he desires to know, and to know instantly and without disturbance, not only who the writer was and what he wrote, but what he looked like; perhaps at various ages; where he lived, what his handwriting was, and how he appeared in caricature to his contemporaries.*

*No book has hitherto been presented to the public which has fulfilled these various requirements, since it has only recently become possible to review the English literature of fifteen successive centuries, and give a carefully-related history of it all, illustrated by the necessary documents. The research of the last generation of scholars, however, has at length put the outlines within our reach, and has even enabled us to fill up the design with form and colour. If there is now a danger for the general reader, it is that too much may be offered him by specialists who can only measure his requirements by their own limitless zeal. A popular history which supplies too much is hardly more useful than one which supplies too little. The present volumes are called by their authors a "record"; they profess to be no more, but in producing such a rapid survey or outline of our literary history the greatest pains have been taken to make it harmonious in design and to see that the parts are carefully arranged according to their relative importance.*

*To the running commentary which pervades the volumes (and which may, if the reader wishes, be read alone as a critical narrative) have been added brief biographies of writers selected with the utmost care from the vast army of those who have exercised the profession of letters in Great Britain for so many centuries. It has been far easier to include the obvious names than to exclude those which did not seem quite fitted for a place in this rapid "record." The authors have carefully weighed the value of every reputation which could*

*seem to have a claim upon them, and it is the fault of their plan if they have been obliged to omit some curious or graceful writers, who are far from being without merit, but whose history cannot be said to advance the general narrative. For these omissions they willingly take the responsibility. But they believe that every man or woman of past time, whose work actually illustrated the movement of style and thought in England, will be found to have a niche in these volumes.*

*The illustrations form a feature of the book which is of supreme importance, but which must be left in the main to recommend itself. It will be admitted that no previous attempt to teach the history of English literature by means of the eye has approached the present enterprise in fulness and variety. The constantly increasing facilities of reproduction, the collection and arrangement of the national treasures, the opportunity to compare and select out of this wealth the elements which appeal to the popular taste, the means by which an artistic counterpart of a rare object can be produced,—all these have never before been contrived as they can be at the present moment. The publisher claims only to have availed himself of these as fully as opportunity has permitted.*

*April 1903.*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## VOLUME I

### CHAPTER I

#### THE BEGINNINGS

Duality of English Speech—The Celt, the Roman, and the Saxon—Christianity and Anglo-Saxon Literature—Pope Gregory the Great—Pre-Christian Literature—Widsith—*Beowulf*—Composition and Analysis of the Poem—Anglo-Saxon Metre—Caedmon—Poems ascribed to Caedmon—Cynewulf—Anglo-Saxon Lyric—Education—Aldhelm—Beda—Alcuin . . . . . Pp. 1-36

### CHAPTER II

#### FROM THE DANE TO THE NORMAN

Latin Influence on Anglo-Saxon Literature—Danish and Scandinavian Influences—Ruin of Literature and Learning—Alfred the Great—Victories over the Danes—Alfred as a Man of Letters—His Translations—*Boethius*—His Prose and Verse—Ecclesiastical Influences on Literature in the Tenth Century—Aelfric—The Danish Conquest—*The Saxon Chronicle*—Poetry of the Tenth Century—Edward the Confessor . . . . . Pp. 37-68

### CHAPTER III

#### EARLY ENGLISH LITERATURE TO "PIERS PLOWMAN"

Effects of the Norman Conquest—Anglo-Saxon Dialects—Ethical and Religious Writings—*The Ormulum*—Layamon's *Brut*—Character and History of the Book—Layamon's Metre and Dialect—Popular Poetry—*The Ancren Riwle*—*The Aenbite of Inwit*—*Cursor Mundi*—Richard Rolle—The Fourteenth Century—Langland—*Piers Plowman*—Metre and Diction—Conduct and General Spirit of the Poem . . . . . Pp. 69-101

### CHAPTER IV

#### ANGLO-NORMAN LITERATURE, ROMANCE, BALLAD AND HISTORY

Contrast of Saxon and Norman—The Romances—The Carolingian Cycle—The Arthurian Cycle—Metres of Romantic Poetry—*Sir Gawain*—Marie de France—National Romances—Elegiac Poetry—*The Pearl*—Songs and Music—Lawrence Minot—Metrical Chronicles—Geoffrey of Monmouth—Matthew Paris—Erudite Writers . . . . . Pp. 102-134

## CHAPTER V

## CHAUCER

Chaucer's Family History and Life—His Position in English Literature—His Character—Early Writings—*Romaunt of the Rose*—*The House of Fame*—*The Canterbury Tales*—Language and Metre—Plan of the Tales—Chaucer as a Painter of Social Types—Humour and Morality—*Troilus and Cryseide*—*Legend of Good Women*—Minor Works—Significance of Chaucer—Supposititious Poems—Aids to the Study of Chaucer

Pp. 135-173

## CHAPTER VI

THE SUCCESSORS OF CHAUCER—THE BEGINNINGS  
OF CULTIVATED PROSE

Chaucer and his Contemporaries—Gower—*Speculum Meditantis*—*Vox Clamantis*—*Confessio Amantis*—Gower and Chaucer—Lydgate—His Merits as a Descriptive Poet—Hoccleve—His Life and Character—Mandeville—Problems of his Book—His Identity—His Mendacity and Plagiarism—Merits of his Style—Minor Prose Writers Pp. 174-203

## CHAPTER VII

## THE ENGLISH BIBLE—THE MIRACLE PLAY

The Bible and Literature—History of the English Bible—Wycliffe—His Early Life—Wycliffe as Reformer—His Version of the Scriptures—Nicholas of Hereford—John Purvey—Comparison of Wycliffe's and Purvey's Versions—Wycliffe's Theological Writings—The Religious Drama—The Miracle Play—The Sacred Drama on the Stage—The Mysteries—The Chester Mysteries—The York Mysteries—The Towneley Mysteries—Literary Characteristics of the Miracle Play—Beneficial Effects of the Religious Drama . . . . . Pp. 204-237

## CHAPTER VIII

## THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

Invention of Printing—Intellectual Sterility of the Age—Decline of Originality—Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester—Bishop Pecock—John Capgrave—Sir John Fortescue—*The Paston Letters*—History of the Paston Family—Characteristics of the Letters—Malory—*The Morte d'Arthur*—Caxton and Malory—Caxton—His Life and Career as a Printer—His Publications and Translations—Caxton as Author and Critic . . . . . Pp. 238-273

## CHAPTER IX

## THE LITERATURE OF SCOTLAND—THE BALLAD

Slow Progress of Scottish Literature—Thomas the Rhymer—John Barbour—*The Bruce*—Barbour's Talent for Description—Huchown of the Awle Ryale—*The Great Geste of Arthure*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ix

—Andrew Wyntoun—James the First—*The Kingis Quair*—Authorship of the Poem—Blind Harry—*The Wallace Epic*—Henryson—*Testament of Cresseid*—Fables—The Ballad—*A Little Geste of Robin Hood*—The Percy Ballads—Historical and Legendary Ballads—*The Nut Brown Maid* . . . . . Pp. 274-312

## CHAPTER X

### THE AGE OF THE FIRST TUDORS

Erasmus—Sir Thomas More—His Life and Character—*Utopia*—Minor Works—John Colet—Lord Berners' *Froissart*—Sir Thomas Elyot—Bishop Gardiner—Thomas Wilson—Ascham—*The Schoolmaster*—*Toxophilus*—The Translation of the Bible—Tyndale—His Chief Writings—Coverdale—Cranmer—Latimer—Skelton—Barclay—*The Ship of Fools*—Wyatt—The Earl of Surrey—Comparison of Surrey and Wyatt—Sternhold's Version of the Psalms—Dunbar—*The Golden Targe*—*The Lament of the Makers*—Gavin Douglas—Translation of *Virgil*—Sir David Lyndsay—John Heywood—Cavendish's *Life of Wolsey* . . . . . Pp. 313-360

## VOLUME II

### CHAPTER I

#### THE GREAT ELIZABETHAN PROSE-WRITERS

Political and Literary Outlook at Elizabeth's Accession—Reformation and Renaissance—The Four great Prose-writers—Bacon—Hooker—Sidney—Raleigh—Bacon's Relations with Essex—Bacon as Statesman and Author—His Rise and Fall—Retirement and Death—Hooker—*The Ecclesiastical Polity*—Sidney—His Life and Character—His Poetry—*The Arcadia*—Raleigh—His Life—The Expedition to Guiana—His Imprisonment—*The History of the World*—His Minor Works . . . . . Pp. 1-62

### CHAPTER II

#### THE LESSER LIGHTS OF ELIZABETHAN PROSE

Special Characteristics of the Age—Queen Elizabeth—Edward Hall—Grafton—Stow—Holinshed—Harrison—Foxe—Camden—Speed—Bodley—Cotton—John Knox—George Buchanan—Hakluyt—Purchas—Knolles—Rycaut—Gerard—Reginald Scot—*The Art of English Poetry*—Webbe—Harvey—Meres—Gosson—John Lyly—Lodge—Robert Greene—Nash—Translation of the Scriptures—The Bishops' Bible—Sir Thomas North—John Florio—*The English Mercurie* . . . . . Pp. 63-108

### CHAPTER III

#### SPENSER AND MINOR ELIZABETHAN POETS

Edmund Spenser—*The Faerie Queene*—*The Shepherd's Calendar*—Minor Poems—Thomas Sackville—Gascoigne—Tusser—Minor Translations—Clement Robinson—Thomas

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Watson—Bartholomew Yong—Constable—Barnes—Lok—Southwell—Barnfield—*England's Helicon*—Lyly, Greene and Lodge as Lyric Poets—Edward de Vere—Dyer—Warner—Fraunce—Edwards—Alexander Hume—Ballads, Carols and Catches

Pp. 109-153

### CHAPTER IV ✓

#### THE PREDECESSORS OF SHAKESPEARE

**The Development of Elizabethan Drama**—The Moralities—*Everyman*—*Hickesconner*—*Skelton*—*Lindsay*—The Early Plays—Udall—*Ralph Roister Doister*—*Gammer Gurton's Needle*—*Gorboduc*—The first regular English Tragedy—Richard Edwards—Early Theatres and Representatives—Actors—Alleyn—Tarleton—Marlowe—The Regenerator of the Drama—What we know of his Life—*Tamburlaine*—*Faustus*—*The Jew of Malta*—*Hero and Leander*—Kyd—Peele—Greene—Chettle—Munday—*The Misfortunes of Arthur*

Pp. 154-190

### CHAPTER V ✓

#### SHAKESPEARE

**His absolute Supremacy**—His consummate Art and Genius—The overawing Vastness of Shakespeare—Obscurity of his Ancestors—Early Life at Stratford—His Marriage—His Departure from Stratford—His Earliest Productions—The Shakespeare-Bacon Question—His First Play probably *Love's Labour's Lost*—The different Plays discussed—His Return to Stratford—The Earls of Southampton and Pembroke—The Sonnets—Their Importance in Connection with Shakespeare's Life—Their poetic Merit—Romantic Comedies—Shakespeare's Position at the End of the Sixteenth Century

Pp. 191-222

### CHAPTER VI ✓

#### SHAKESPEARE—(continued)

**Shakespeare's Affairs not so bright**—Disgrace of Essex, Southampton and Pembroke—*Julius Cæsar*—*Hamlet*—Its Stage History—Discussion of the Play and the Characters—Shakespeare's Prospects improving—Death of Elizabeth—Privileges given to Shakespeare's Company of Actors—The Chronology of the Plays—A Difficult Question—*Othello*—*Lear*—Shakespeare takes up his Residence again in Stratford—A regular Contributor to the Stage—His latest Dramas—His Death and Burial—His unassailable Position far apart from all other Poets . . . . .

Pp. 223-256

### CHAPTER VII

#### THE JACOBAN POETS

**The Death of Elizabeth**—Its Influence on Letters—Distinction between Elizabethan and Jacobean—James I—*Basiliſkon Doreſon*—The Sonneteers—Daniel—*Delia*—*The Civil Wars*—Sir John Davys—Drayton—A prosaic Poet—*Polyolbion*—The Satirists—*Parnassus*—The Song-writers—Campion—Dowland—Breton—The School of Spenser—Giles and Phineas Fletcher—William Browne—Wither—Quarles—Lord Brooke—John Taylor—Patrick



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

xi

Hannay—A greater Poet than any of these—Donne—The great Merits and great Faults of his Style—Drummond of Hawthornden—Harington—Richard Carew—Fairfax—Sylvester—Chapman—The *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* . . . Pp. 257-306

### CHAPTER VIII JACOBAN DRAMA

The immeasurable Difference between Shakespeare and the other Dramatists—Difficulty of treating them fairly—Ben Jonson—*Every Man in His Humour*—*Volpone*—Genius and Character of Jonson—Beaumont and Fletcher—*The Maid's Tragedy*—*The Faithful Shepherdess*—Chapman—Dekker—Webster—Marston—Cyril Tourneur—Heywood—Middleton—Rowley—John Day—Nabbes—Massinger—Nathaniel Field—Ford—Shirley—Extinction of the Drama . . . . . Pp. 307-363

### CHAPTER IX JACOBAN PROSE

The Historians—Sir John Hayward—Sir Henry Spelman—Richard Knolles—Theology—Lancelot Andrewes—Thomas Morton—George Hakewill—Donne—Joseph Hall—Sir Thomas Overbury—Pamphleteers—Dekker—Sir Henry Wotton—John Hales—Criticism—*Crudities* of Thomas Coryat—Gervase Markham—John Selden . . . . . Pp. 364-386



# LIST OF THE ILLUSTRATIONS

## VOLUME I

Equestrian Portrait of Chaucer (Ellesmere MS.) . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>	The Cathedral Church of Peter- borough . . . . .	<i>page</i> 74
Seal of Henry VIII. . . . .	<i>Title-page</i>	A Page from the Hatton Gospels . . . . .	" 75
Pope Gregory sends Missionaries to England . . . . .	<i>to face page</i> 4	Extract from the MS. of the "Or- mulum" . . . . .	" 77
A page from the MS. of Beowulf . . . . .	" 10	Christ and the Doctors . . . . .	" 80
Caedmon's Hymn . . . . .	<i>page</i> 19	A Thirteenth-Century Psalter . . . . .	<i>to face page</i> 82
Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise (Caedmon) . . . . .	" 20	From Layamon's "Brut" . . . . .	" 84
Anglo-Saxon Musicians . . . . .	" 21	A Page from a Bestiary Book . . . . .	<i>page</i> 86
The Ruthwell Cross . . . . .	" 22	Extract from the MS. of "The An- cren Kniwe" . . . . .	" 88
Defeat of the Bad Angel (Caedmon) <i>to face page</i>	22	Facsimile of the "Oxford Provision" <i>to face page</i>	88
From a MS. of Caedmon's Hymn . . . . .	" 24	Extract from the MS. of "The Ayenbite of Inwyrt" . . . . .	<i>page</i> 90
Facsimile of Anglo-Saxon MS. from the Vercelli Library . . . . .	<i>page</i> 28	Extract from the MS. of "Cursor Mundi" . . . . .	" 91
St. Luke (from the Gospel Book of St. Augustine) . . . . .	<i>to face page</i> 30	"Treuthe's Pilgryme atte Plow" . . . . .	" 95
Beginning of St. Luke's Gospel . . . . .	<i>page</i> 34	From Langland's "Piers Plowman" <i>to face page</i>	96
The Caedmon Cross . . . . .	" 35	Malvern Church . . . . .	<i>page</i> 97
Ruins of Lindisfarne Abbey . . . . .	" 38	First page of the MS. of "Piers Plowman" . . . . .	<i>to face page</i> 98
Coin of Alfred the Great . . . . .	" 42	A Fragment of a XVth Century Translation of the Chanson de Roland . . . . .	" 104
Jewel of Alfred the Great . . . . .	" 43	Woodcut from the Romance of Richard Cœur de Lion . . . . .	<i>page</i> 108
Pope Leo IV. . . . .	" 45	Illustration from "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight" . . . . .	" 110
Passage from the Life of St. Neot, giving story of Alfred and the Cakes . . . . .	" 47	A Page from a Translation of the "Lay of Launfal" . . . . .	<i>to face page</i> 112
A Latin Psalter with Anglo-Saxon Gloss . . . . .	<i>to face page</i> 48	Illustration from "Syr Bevis of Hampton" . . . . .	<i>page</i> 115
Extract from Anglo-Saxon Chron- icle, mentioning the death of Alfred . . . . .	<i>page</i> 53	Illustration from "Guy of War- wick" . . . . .	" 116
Beginning of the Laws of Alfred . . . . .	" 55	Illustration from "Ye Noble Helyas Knyghte of the Swanne" . . . . .	" 119
Coin of Edward the Elder . . . . .	" 57	Illustrations from the "Pearl" <i>pages</i>	120 & 123
Coin of Edgar . . . . .	" 58	MS. of an old English Spring Song <i>page</i>	124
From Aelfric's Paraphrase of the Pentateuch . . . . .	<i>to face page</i> 60	From a MS. of Geoffrey of Mon- mouth with contemporary sketch of London . . . . .	" 129
Extract from the Saxon Chronicle . . . . .	<i>page</i> 61	A Page from a MS. of Giraldus Cambrensis . . . . .	" 131
Coin of Canute . . . . .	" 62	Illustration from the Life of Offa by Matthew Paris . . . . .	" 132
Edgar offering up his Charter for the new Minster at Winchester <i>to face page</i>	62		
A Page from the Legend of St. Guth- lac (Exeter MS.) . . . . .	<i>page</i> 64		
Seal of Edward the Confessor (ob- verse and reverse) . . . . .	" 67		
Digging out the Fox (Tailpiece) . . . . .	" 68		

King Edward III. . . . .	page	136	An Extract from Commentary on the Apocalypse (ascribed to Wycliffe) . . . . .	page	210
Geoffrey Chaucer (National Portrait Gallery) . . . . .	"	138	Wycliffe's Pulpit in Lutterworth Church . . . . .	"	211
Chaucer's Grave in Westminster Abbey . . . . .	"	139	King Henry IV. . . . .	"	212
Portrait of Chaucer (Early XVth Century MS.) . . . . .	to face page	140	Two Pages from the Wycliffite Bible, translated by Nicholas of Hereford . . . . .	to face pages	214 & 216
House at Woodstock . . . . .	page	143	A Page from the Wycliffe Bible . . . . .	to face page	218
A Page from the Kelmscott Edition of "Troilus and Cryseide" . . . . .	to face page	144	Representation of a Mystery Play . . . . .	page	224
Plan of Canterbury in the XVth Century . . . . .	page	148	Shepherds presenting their Gifts to the Infant Christ . . . . .	to face page	227
Illustration from the "Decamerone," 1492 . . . . .	"	149	Illustration from "The Harrying of Hell" . . . . .	page	228
Canterbury Pilgrims (from a MS. in the British Museum) . . . . .	to face page	150	A Page from the Coventry Mysteries . . . . .	to face page	228
The Tabard Inn, Southwark . . . . .	page	151	A Page from the York Mysteries . . . . .	"	230
A Page from Caxton's Edition of the "Tales" . . . . .	"	152	A Scholar's Room in the XVth Century . . . . .	page	239
Pilgrims Setting out from the Tabard (from Urry's "Chaucer") . . . . .	"	153	King Henry V. . . . .	"	241
Canterbury Pilgrims (from a picture by Stothard) . . . . .	to face page	156	Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester . . . . .	"	242
Contemporary representations of the Pilgrims from the Ellesmere and Cambridge University MSS. . . . .	pages 154, 158, 167, 171, 173		Tomb of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester . . . . .	"	243
A Page from the Canterbury Tales . . . . .	to face page	166	John Tiptoft, Earl of Worcester, and his Two Wives . . . . .	"	244
King Richard II. and Anne of Bohemia . . . . .	page	169	John Capgrave presenting his Book on Genesis to Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester . . . . .	to face page	247
Miniature Portrait of Gower . . . . .	"	176	Inscription from Capgrave's Book on Genesis . . . . .	page	247
Illuminator presenting MS. to Patron . . . . .	to face page	176	A Page from Capgrave's "Life of St. Gilbert" . . . . .	"	248
Effigy of Gower . . . . .	page	177	Sir John Fortescue . . . . .	"	249
From Gower's "Confessio Amantis" . . . . .	"	179	The Declaration made by Sir John Fortescue . . . . .	to face page	250
Nebuchadnezzar's Dream from the "Confessio Amantis" . . . . .	"	183	A Letter from Margaret Paston . . . . .	page	252
The Abbey, Bury St. Edmund . . . . .	"	185	Autograph of Sir John Fastolf . . . . .	"	253
Lydgate in his Study . . . . .	"	186	Caister Castle . . . . .	"	254
Illustration from Lydgate's "Fall of Princes" . . . . .	"	188	Lancelot at a Tournament . . . . .	"	256
Lydgate presenting his Poem to the King . . . . .	to face page	188	A Page from Malory's "Mort d'Arthur" . . . . .	to face page	256
A Page from Lydgate's "Story of Thebes" . . . . .	"	190	Caxton's Advertisement at Westminster . . . . .	page	259
Sir John Mandeville . . . . .	page	195	A Page from "Dictes and Sayings" printed by Caxton . . . . .	to face page	260
Illustrations from a XVth Century MS. of Mandeville's "Travels" . . . . .	pages 196 & 199		Earl Rivers presenting his Book to Edward IV. . . . .	page	263
Illuminated Page from Mandeville's "Travels" . . . . .	to face page	200	Printing in the XVth Century . . . . .	"	264
A Page from Trevisa's Translation of "De Proprietatibus Rerum" . . . . .	"	203	The House at Bruges occupied by Caxton . . . . .	"	265
John Wycliffe . . . . .	page	206	A Page from "Charles the Grete" printed by Caxton . . . . .	to face page	267
From William of Shoreham's Psalter . . . . .	"	207	Paper-making in the XVth Century . . . . .	page	267
Lambeth Palace from the River . . . . .	"	208	Bookbinding in the XVth Century . . . . .	"	268
The Tomb of John of Gaunt . . . . .	"	209	St. Jerome and his Lion . . . . .	"	269
			Two Pages from the "XV O'es" . . . . .	pages 270 & 271	
			A Page from "The Booke of Enydos" printed by Caxton . . . . .	to face page	273

# LIST OF THE ILLUSTRATIONS

xv

The Prophecy of Thomas of Ercildoune to the Countess of Dunbar	page 277	Sir John Cheke	page 329
The Steel Hand of Carslogie.	" 279	Title-page of Wilson's "Arte of Rhetorique"	" 330
Dunfermline Abbey	" 280	Title-page of Ascham's "Schoolmaster"	" 331
A Page from Wyntoun's "Chronicle of Scotland"	to face page 282	Lady Jane Grey	" 332
A Page from the "Morte Arthure"	" 284	The First Page of Tyndale's "Gospel of St. Matthew"	" 333
The Ruins of St. Andrew's Cathedral	page 287	William Tyndale	" 334
King James I. of Scotland	" 287	Title-page of "The Practise of Prelates"	" 335
Æneas Silvius before James I.	to face page 288	Miles Coverdale	" 335
A Page from the "Kingis Quair"	" 290	Thomas Cranmer	" 336
Glasgow University	page 292	Letter from Cranmer to Thomas Cromwell	" 337
Title-page of Henryson's "Testament of Cresseid"	" 294	Hugh Latimer	" 338
"The Taill of the Cok and the Jasp" from Henryson's Fables	" 295	John Leland	" 339
King James II. of Scotland	" 296	John Fisher	" 340
From "A Lytell Geste of Robin Hode" printed by Wynkyn de Worde	" 297	Proclamation of Henry VIII. forbidding the English Bible to be used in the Churches	" 341
"King John and Bishoppe" from the Percy Folio	to face page 298	Title-page of the Bible of 1535	to face page 343
Illustration from Skelton's "Balade of the Scottyshe Kyng"	page 300	Title-page of Henry VIII.'s Book against Luther	page 343
Title-page of Percy's "Reliques"	" 302	Title-page of Skelton's "Little Boke of Phillip Sparow"	" 344
Title-page of "A Mery Geste of Robyne Hode" printed by Copland	" 303	Proclamation of Henry VIII. ordering the English Bible to be used in all Churches	to face page 344
Kirkley Nunnery	" 305	Title-page of Skelton's "Goodly Garlande"	page 346
The Banner of Douglas	" 307	Illustration from Barclay's "Ship of Fools"	" 347
The Nut Brown Maid (from Arnold's Chronicle)	to face page 310	Sir Thomas Wyatt	" 348
Henry VIII.	page 314	Title-page of the Great Bible, 1539	to face page 348
Desiderius Erasmus	" 315	Title-page of Howard's "Songs and Sonnets"	page 350
Title-page of Erasmus' "Apophthegmes"	" 316	Katherine of Arragon	" 352
Sir Thomas More	" 317	Anne Boleyn	" 353
Beaufort House, Chelsea	" 317	Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey	" 354
Title-page of Robinson's Translation of "Utopia"	" 318	King James IV.	" 356
Plan of Utopia	" 319	Title-page of Sternhold's "Certayne Psalmes"	" 357
Headpiece from More's "Utopia"	" 320	MS. Poem by Dunbar in praise of London	" 358
Letter from Sir Thomas More to his daughter	to face page 320	MS. Song of Welcome by Dunbar	to face page 358
John Colet	page 321	Bishop Bale	page 360
Thomas Cromwell	" 322	Edward VI.	" 361
Old St. Paul's Cathedral, before and after the burning of the Spire	" 323	Bishop Bale before Edward VI.	" 361
Thomas Linacre	" 324	Title-page of Gavin Douglas's Translation of Virgil	" 363
Title-page of Lord Berners' "Froissart"	" 325	Title-page of Lindsay's "Works"	" 365
Sir Thomas Elyot	" 326	John Heywood	" 366
Title-page of "The Governour"	" 327	King James V.	" 367
Bishop Gardiner	" 328	Queen Mary I.	" 367
		Cardinal Wolsev	" 368

## VOLUME II

William Shakespeare (Bust) . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>	Initial Letter from Sidney's "Arcadia," 1590 . . . . .	<i>page</i>	43
Shakespeare's Coat of Arms . . . . .	<i>Title-page</i>	Zutphen, the Scene of Sidney's Death . . . . .	"	44
Queen Elizabeth . . . . .	<i>page</i>	1		
Launceston Church . . . . .	"	2		
Sir Nicholas Bacon . . . . .	"	3		
York House . . . . .	"	4		
Lord Burghley . . . . .	"	5		
Francis Bacon . . . . .	"	6		
Sir Francis Walsingham . . . . .	"	7		
Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex . . . . .	"	8		
Title-page of Bacon's "Essays," 1st ed. . . . .	"	9		
Title-page of "Advancement of Learning," 1605 . . . . .	"	10		
Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury . . . . .	"	11		
Sir Edward Coke . . . . .	"	12		
Title-page of Bacon's "Novum Organum," 1620 . . . . .	"	13		
Facsimile page from Bacon's Note-Book . . . . .	"	15		
Monument to Bacon, St. Alban's . . . . .	"	17		
Title-page of "The Advancement of Learning," 1633 . . . . .	"	21		
Francis Bacon (Van Somer) . . . . .	"	23		
Title-page of Bacon's "Reign of Henry VII." . . . .	"	25		
Richard Hooker . . . . .	"	29		
Corpus Christi College, Oxford . . . . .	"	30		
Archbishop Whitgift . . . . .	"	32		
Pope Clement VIII. . . . .	"	33		
Lady Mary Dudley, Wife of Sir Philip Sidney . . . . .	"	34		
Sir Henry Sidney . . . . .	"	35		
Sir Henry Sidney's Return to Dublin after a Victory . . . . .	"	36		
An Irish Chief's last Fight . . . . .	"	36		
Penshurst . . . . .	"	37		
Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke	"	38		
Wilton House, where Sidney wrote the "Arcadia" . . . . .	"	39		
Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester . . . . .	"	40		
Sir Philip Sidney (Oliver) . . . . .	<i>to face page</i>	40		
Title-page of Sidney's "Arcadia," 1590 . . . . .	<i>page</i>	41		
Title-page of Sidney's "Apology for Poetry," 1595 . . . . .	"	42		
		Sir Walter Raleigh (Zucchero) . . . . .	<i>to face page</i>	50
		Facsimile portion of Raleigh's "Journal of a Second Voyage to Guiana" . . . . .	<i>page</i>	52
		Illustration to Raleigh's "Voyage into Virginia," 1585 . . . . .	"	53
		Title-page of Raleigh's "History of the World," 1st ed. . . . .	"	56
		Sir Walter Raleigh (Knole Portrait)	"	59
		Page from Queen Elizabeth's Prayer-book . . . . .	"	64
		Queen Elizabeth (Zucchero) . . . . .	<i>to face page</i>	64
		Queen Elizabeth's Signature . . . . .	<i>page</i>	65
		John Stow . . . . .	"	67
		Title-page of Holinshed's "Chronicles," 1577 . . . . .	"	69
		John Foxe . . . . .	"	70
		Title-page of Foxe's "Book of Martyrs," 1563 . . . . .	"	73
		Burning of Anne Askew at Smithfield	"	74
		William Camden . . . . .	"	77
		John Speed . . . . .	"	78
		Sir Thomas Bodley . . . . .	"	79
		Sir Robert Cotton . . . . .	"	80
		John Knox . . . . .	"	81
		George Buchanan . . . . .	"	82
		Title-page of Hakluyt's "Voyages," 1598 . . . . .	"	83
		Title-page of "Purchas his Pilgrimage," 1613 . . . . .	"	85
		John Gerard . . . . .	"	86
		Title-page of Gerard's "Herbal," 1633 . . . . .	"	87
		Title-page of Puttenham's "Arte of English Poesie" . . . . .	"	89

# LIST OF THE ILLUSTRATIONS

xvii

Facsimile letter from John Lyly to Lord Burghley . . . . .	page 91	Title-page of Bartholomew Yong's "Diana," 1598 . . . . .	page 141
Title-page of Lyly's "Whip for an Ape" . . . . .	92	Title-page of Constable's "Diana" . . . . .	142
Title-page of Lyly's "Campaspe," 1584 . . . . .	93	Robert Southwell . . . . .	143
Title-page of Lodge's "Phyllis," 1593 . . . . .	94	Title-page of "England's Helicon," 1600 . . . . .	144
Illustration from pamphlet "Greene in Conceipte," 1598 . . . . .	95	Edward De Vere, Earl of Oxford . . . . .	147
Title-page of Greene's "Menaphon," 1589 . . . . .	96	Title-page of Warner's "Albion's England," 1589 . . . . .	149
Title-page of Nash's "Four Letters," 1592 . . . . .	97	First page of "Everyman" . . . . .	155
Title-page of "Pierce Penilesse," 1592 . . . . .	98	Title-page of "Hickescorner," 1510 . . . . .	156
Lancelot Andrewes . . . . .	101	Verso of title-page of "Hicke Scorner," 1510 . . . . .	158
Title-page of the "Bishops' Bible," 1611 . . . . .	102	Title-page of "Gammer Gurton's Needle," 1575 . . . . .	163
Title-page of North's translation of "Plutarch's Lives," 1579 . . . . .	104	Knole Park, built by Sackville . . . . .	165
John Florio . . . . .	106	Old Palace at Greenwich . . . . .	168
MS. Page of spurious "English Mercurie" . . . . .	107	Interior of the "Swan Theatre" . . . . .	169
First page of spurious "English Mercurie" . . . . .	108	Corpus Christi College, Cambridge . . . . .	171
Schoolroom at Merchant Taylors, where Spenser was educated . . . . .	110	Memorial to Marlowe at Canterbury . . . . .	173
Edmund Spenser . . . . . to face page 110		Title-page of "Tamburlaine the Great," 1590 . . . . .	174
Pembroke College, Cambridge . . . . . page 111		Woodcut of Faustus and Mephistopheles . . . . .	176
Title-page of Spenser's "Shepherd's Calendar," 1579 . . . . .	112	Title-page of Marlowe's "Edward II.," 1598 . . . . .	179
Ruins of Kilcolman Castle . . . . .	113	Title-page of Marlowe's "Hero and Leander," 1598 . . . . .	180
Title-page of "The Faerie Queene," 1590 . . . . .	114	Title-page of Kyd's "Spanish Tragedy" . . . . .	182
Edmund Spenser's Tomb, Westminster Abbey . . . . .	115	Title-page of Peele's "Arraignement of Paris," 1584 . . . . .	183
Red Cross Knight (The) . . . . .	117	Title-page of Chettle's "Kind Heart's Dream" . . . . .	188
Mary, Queen of Scots . . . . .	119	Shakespeare's Birthplace before Restoration . . . . .	192
Document in Spenser's hand . . . . . to face page 120		Shakespeare (Chandos Portrait) . . . . . to face page 192	
From "The Shepherd's Calendar," 1597 . . . . . page 124		Shakespeare's Birthplace as at present restored . . . . . page 194	
From "The Shepherd's Calendar," 1597 . . . . .	125	Anne Hathaway's Cottage . . . . .	195
Thomas Sackville, Earl of Dorset . . . . .	130	Kenilworth Castle (17th Century) . . . . .	197
Title-page of "The Mirror for Magistrates" . . . . .	131	Parish Church, Stratford-on-Avon . . . . .	199
Geo. Gascoigne presenting his Book to the Queen . . . . .	134	Nicholas Rowe . . . . .	200
Title-page of "The Steel Glass," 1576 . . . . .	135	Title-page of "Love's Labour's Lost," 1598 . . . . .	202
Title-page of Tusser's "Hundred Good Points of Husbandry" . . . . .	136	Fortune Playhouse (The) . . . . .	203
Title-page of Churchyard's "Worthiness of Wales," 1587 . . . . .	137	Edmund Kean as Richard III. . . . .	204
Title-page of Golding's translation of Ovid, 1567 . . . . .	137	Title-page of "Lucrece," 1594 quarto . . . . .	206
Title-page of Robinson's "Handfull of Pleasant Delites," 1584 . . . . .	138	Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton . . . . .	207
Title-page of Watson's "Hekatompathia" . . . . .	140	Charlecote House and Park (18th Century) . . . . .	208
		David Garrick and Mrs. Bellamy in "Romeo and Juliet" . . . . .	210
		Title-page of "Romeo and Juliet," 1597 quarto . . . . .	211
		Edward Alleyn . . . . .	212

New Place, Stratford-on-Avon . . . . .	page	213	Facsimile page of MS. of "Basili-		
Macklin and Miss Pope as Shylock			kon Doron" . . . . .	page	262
and Portia . . . . .	"	214	Title-page of Bartholomew Griffin's		
William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke	"	215	" Fidesa" . . . . .	"	263
Title-page of the "Sonnets," 1609	"	216	Title-page of "The Civile Wares,"		
Mrs. Abingdon as Beatrice . . . . .	"	217	1609 . . . . .	"	264
Elliston as Falstaff in "Henry			Anne Clifford, Countess of Dorset	"	265
IV," . . . . .	"	218	Title-page of Samuel Daniel's		
Richard Burbage . . . . .	"	219	" Delia," 1592 . . . . .	"	266
Mrs. Woffington as Mrs. Ford . . . . .	"	220	Title-page of Sir John Davys's		
Richard Tarleton, comedy actor of			" Nosce Teipsum," 1590 . . . . .	"	267
Elizabeth's time . . . . .	"	221	Michael Drayton . . . . .	"	268
Globe Theatre at Southwark . . . . .	"	224	Title-page of Drayton's "Poems,"		
Title-page of First Quarto of			1606 . . . . .	"	269
"Hamlet" . . . . .	"	225	Title-page of Drayton's "Poly-Ol-		
Opening page of First Quarto of			bion," 1612 . . . . .	"	270
"Hamlet" . . . . .	"	227	Title-page of Drayton's "Owle," 1604	"	272
Fechter as Hamlet . . . . .	"	228	Title-page of John Dowland's		
Title-page of the 1605 "Hamlet"	"	229	"Booke of Songes," 1597 . . . . .	"	274
Duke's Theatre, Dorset Gardens . . . . .	"	230	Page of Music from Campion's		
Plan of the Bankside, Southwark,			"Book of Ayres," 1601 . . . . .	"	277
in Shakespeare's time . . . . .	"	232	Title-page of Nicholas Breton's		
Edmund Malone . . . . .	"	233	"The Will of Wit," 1599 . . . . .	"	279
Stage of the Red Bull Playhouse,			Title-page of Nicholas Breton's		
Clerkenwell . . . . .	"	234	"A Murmur," 1607 . . . . .	"	280
Cooke as Iago, in "Othello" . . . . .	"	235	Title-page of Giles Fletcher's		
David Garrick as King Lear . . . . .	"	236	"Christ's Victorie," 1610 . . . . .	"	281
Mrs. Cibber as Cordelia in "King			Title-page of "Britannia's Pas-		
Lear" . . . . .	"	237	torals," 1613 . . . . .	"	283
Macready as Macbeth . . . . .	"	238	George Wither (John Payne) . . . . .	"	284
Mrs. Siddons as Lady Macbeth . . . . .	"	238	Title-page of Wither's "Shep-		
Swan Theatre on the Bankside			heards Hunting," 1615 . . . . .	"	285
(The) . . . . .	"	229	George Wither (W. Hole) . . . . .	"	286
Shakespeare (Droeshout) . . . . .	to face page	230	Title-page of Wither's "Juvenilia,"		
Quick as Launce in "Two Gen-			1622 . . . . .	"	287
tlemen of Verona" . . . . .	page	240	Francis Quarles . . . . .	"	287
Falcon Tavern (The) . . . . .	"	241	Title-page of Quarles's "Argalus		
Miss Yonge and Messrs. Dodd,			and Parthenia," 1629 . . . . .	"	288
Waldron and Love in "Twelfth			Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke . . . . .	"	289
Night" . . . . .	"	242	Title-page of the Works of John		
Dunstall as Dromio in "The			Taylor . . . . .	"	290
Comedy of Errors" . . . . .	"	243	Title-page of Patrick Hannay's		
Mrs. Wells as Lavinia in "Titus			Poems . . . . .	"	291
Andronicus" . . . . .	"	244	John Donne (Lombart) . . . . .	"	292
Miss Horton as Ariel in "The			Title-page of the "Pseudo-Martyr,"		
Tempest" . . . . .	"	245	1610 . . . . .	"	293
Title-page of First Folio edition of			William Drummond of Hawthorn-		
Shakespeare . . . . .	"	246	den (Gaywood) . . . . .	"	296
Shakespeare's Signature . . . . .	"	247	Hawthornden . . . . .	"	297
Inscription on Shakespeare's Grave	"	249	William Drummond of Hawthorn-		
Inscription on Grave of Shake-			den (Janssen) . . . . .	"	298
speare's Wife . . . . .	"	250	Engraved portrait of Chapman . . . . .	"	299
Inscription on Grave of Shake-			Title-page of Chapman's "Homer,"		
speare's Daughter . . . . .	"	252	1616 . . . . .	"	300
Two Views of Shakespeare's Bust	"	253	Title-page of "Godfrey of Bul-		
Chancel of Stratford Church . . . . .	"	254	loigne," 1600 . . . . .	"	301
Title-page of "Works of King			Title-page of "Orlando Furioso" . . . . .	"	302
James I." 1619 . . . . .	"	259	Letter from Haryngton . . . . .	"	303
James I . . . . .	to face page	260	Joshua Sylvester . . . . .	"	304



# LIST OF THE ILLUSTRATIONS

xix

Letter from Sylvester to James I. . . . .	page 305	Allegorical Plate from the "Hier-	
Title-page of Sylvester's translation		archy of the Blessed Angels" . . . . .	page 341
of Du Bartas' "Divine Weekes		Title-page of Heywood's "Gunai-	
and Workes," 1605 . . . . .	306	keion," 1624 . . . . .	343
Miniatures of Ben Jonson, Fletcher		Thomas Middleton . . . . .	345
and Donne . . . . .	to face page 308	Title-page of Middleton's "Game	
Title-page of Collected Works of		at Chess," 1624 . . . . .	346
Ben Jonson, 1616. . . . .	page 311	Title-page of Middleton and Row-	
Title-page of Ben Jonson's "Every		ley's "Fair Quarrel," 1617 . . . . .	347
Man in his Humour," 1601 . . . . .	313	Title-page of "A New Wonder,	
Lucy Harrington, Countess of		a Woman Never Vexed," 1632 . . . . .	348
Bedford . . . . .	314	Woodcut Illustration from John	
Title-page of Ben Jonson's "Vol-		Day's "Parliament of Bees,"	
pone," 1607 . . . . .	315	1641 . . . . .	349
Inigo Jones . . . . .	316	Philip Massinger . . . . .	351
Ben Jonson's Tomb in Westminster		Title-page of "A New Way to	
Abbey . . . . .	317	Pay Old Debts," 1633 . . . . .	352
Figures designed by Inigo Jones for		Facsimile Letter from Massinger . . . . .	353
a Masque . . . . .	318	Nathaniel Field . . . . .	356
Ben Jonson . . . . .	to face page 320	Title-page of Ford's "Broken	
Page from Ben Jonson's "Masque		Heart," 1633 . . . . .	357
of Queens" . . . . .	page 320	James Shirley . . . . .	360
Frontispiece to Ben Jonson's		Title-page of Shirley's collected	
"Horace" . . . . .	321	"Poems," 1646 . . . . .	361
Francis Beaumont . . . . .	322	Sir John Hayward . . . . .	366
Title-page of Beaumont and		Chelsea College . . . . .	367
Fletcher's "Maid's Tragedie,"		Sir Henry Spelman . . . . .	368
1622 . . . . .	323	Title-page of "The History of the	
John Fletcher (National Portrait		Turks," 1603 . . . . .	369
Gallery) . . . . .	324	Westminster in the Seventeenth	
Title-page of "The Faithfull Shep-		Century . . . . .	371
herdesse" . . . . .	325	Thomas Morton . . . . .	373
John Fletcher (Collected Works) . . . . .	326	Portrait of Donne in his Winding-	
George Chapman . . . . .	328	sheet . . . . .	374
Title-page of George Chapman's		John Donne (Marshall) . . . . .	to face page 374
"Monsieur D'Olive," 1606 . . . . .	329	Letter from Donne to Sir Robert	
Chapman's Tomb in St. Giles'		Cotton . . . . .	page 375
Church . . . . .	330	Bishop Hall . . . . .	376
Receipt for 40s., with Chapman's		Title-page of Hall's "Virgidemia-	
Signature . . . . .	331	rum," 1597 . . . . .	377
Title-page of Dekker's "Pleasant		Sir Thomas Overbury . . . . .	378
Comedie of Old Fortunatus,"		Title-page of Overbury's "Wife,"	
1600 . . . . .	332	1614 . . . . .	379
Title-page of Dekker and Middle-		The Countess of Somerset . . . . .	380
ton's "Roaring Girl," 1611 . . . . .	333	Title-page of Pamphlet concerning	
Moll Cutpurse (from the "Roaring		Murder of Sir Thomas Overbury	
Girl") . . . . .	334	Title-page of Dekker's "Dream,"	
Title-page of Webster's "Duchess		1620 . . . . .	382
of Malfy," 1623 . . . . .	335	Title-page of Rowland's "Betray-	
St. Andrew's Church, Holborn . . . . .	336	ing of Christ," 1598 . . . . .	383
Title-page of Marston's "Antonio		Receipt for 20s. with Dekker's	
and Mellida," 1602 . . . . .	337	signature . . . . .	384
Title-page of Marston's "Tragedies		Sir Henry Wotton . . . . .	385
and Comedies," 1633 . . . . .	338	Title-page of the "Crudities," 1611 . . . . .	386
Title-page of Tourneur's "The		Title-page of Markham's "Country	
Revenger's Tragedy," 1607 . . . . .	339	Contentments," 1615 . . . . .	387
Title-page of Heywood's "Hier-		John Selden . . . . .	388
archy of the Blessed Angels,"		Title-page of Selden's "Table-	
1635 . . . . .	340	Talk," 1689 . . . . .	389



VOLUME I  
FROM THE BEGINNINGS TO THE AGE  
OF HENRY VIII

BY  
RICHARD GARNETT, C.B., LL.D.



SEAL OF HENRY VIII



## PREFACE TO THE FIRST VOLUME

IN this initial volume of a History of English Literature it has been sought to depict for readers of general culture rather than of special attainment the development of this literature through centuries of vicissitude, from the primitive period when it is almost synonymous with poetry to the period when, in every department, it begins to challenge a place among the great literatures of the world. The writer upon whom such a task devolves encounters the obstacles, on a first view mutually exclusive, of impenetrable obscurity and unmanageable light. Many passages in the record have perished, and the gaps thus created are ill supplied by speculation and conjecture. But, on the other hand, since the investigation of early English literature has employed the scholars of America, Germany, and France hardly less than those of Britain, it has become difficult to keep pace with the progress of actual discovery, or to survey the operations of so great a host of labourers in a field so extensive, much of whose service takes the form of contribution to periodical literature. The writer has done his utmost towards this end, and has received invaluable assistance, yet he feels that his work would have better corresponded to his wish if various important accessions to the knowledge of his subject had not fallen under his observation too late to be turned to account.

One reflection has strongly impressed itself upon the writer's mind during the prosecution of his labours: that the study of the literary history of a nation will generally be profitable in proportion to the student's acquaintance with the history of the nation itself, including that of its institutions, political and social. In the case of a history of early literature treating, as in this instance, of a period anterior to the attainment of a fixed standard of language, some degree of philological information also is essential, comprising such subjects as dialectical variations, pronunciation, and prosody. To have enlarged upon this department of study would have defeated the design of this

## PREFACE

work as a popular history. It has therefore been intentionally kept in the background, and the reader is recommended to seek his information elsewhere. In this he will be assisted by a bibliography to be appended to a subsequent volume. History, including parallels with the literary movements of other nations, stands in a different category. A due infusion of the historical element adds warmth and colour to narrative, and is therefore accordant with the ideal of a popular history. Such an infusion has been attempted here as far as considerations of space and proportion have permitted. Regard for the interests of the reader of the present day has also enforced an extensive modernisation of obsolete spelling. Objectors should remember that it is impossible to say what precise orthography an ancient author would have employed, and that in the majority of instances he would himself have followed no uniform rule.

It remains to offer the writer's special acknowledgments to Mr. Alfred W. Pollard, of the British Museum, for friendly and zealous aid, not merely in those branches of the subject in which he is a recognised authority, but throughout the entire course of the work; as also to Mr. A. H. Bullen and Mrs. Sydney Pawling for valuable assistance in the pictorial illustration which forms so important a feature of the undertaking.

RICHARD GARNETT.

## CHAPTER I

### THE BEGINNINGS

449-849

LITERATURE is the daughter of Language. For the study, therefore, of a literature it is essential to possess a clear view of any features of the idiom in which it is conveyed which may contribute to impress it with a peculiar character.

The most exceptional characteristic of the English language as spoken and written for centuries past is the dual constitution of its vocabulary, in which it differs from all the other leading languages of Europe, and can only be paralleled with those tongues of Eastern and Western Asia which have respectively become pervaded with Chinese or Arabic influence. All European languages, indeed, have borrowed largely, and Spanish might almost seem a compound of three or four distinct tongues spoken by widely differing races. Yet even here Latin is distinctly the paramount speech, and the others are but its satellites. In English alone two constituents, one indigenous, the other engrafted, practically balance each other. Both are essential to the language; one as forming the original nucleus of personality without which English would be a mere dialect of some foreign idiom; the other as possessing that sure criterion of vitality, the capacity of growth and modification. This our original Anglo-Saxon speech has lost, and recent endeavours to restore it have only served to prove the loss perpetual. The indigenous portion, therefore, of our vocabulary is the more nationally characteristic, the engrafted is the more flexible and copious. The stability of one element is admirably balanced by the plasticity of the other. Their union in one speech, frequently permitting choice between two words equally appropriate, has largely contributed to render the English vocabulary opulent and to impart colour and music to English style.

*Duality of  
English  
Speech*

The circumstance on which we have thus briefly dwelt may be considered as the key to the history of English literature, which appears as a constant struggle between innate and exotic constituents. As regards the mere vocabulary of the language this struggle did not commence until the Norman Conquest, but as concerns the spirit of the literature it had begun much sooner. The epic of *Beowulf* shows the direction which

*Native and  
foreign in-  
gredients in  
English*

Anglo-Saxon literature might have taken without Latin interference ; almost all its other monuments show what, under that interference, it actually became. The distinction is not in the outer vesture of words, but in the inner spirit. With the Norman Conquest it comes to prevail in both, and the history of both language and literature ever since may be described as that of the gradual approximation and interfusion of constituents seemingly irreconcilable, and the occasional attempts, fortunately unsuccessful, of one of these to expel the other. It may almost be said that the same duality repeats itself in every English institution, civil and ecclesiastical, so closely does the national speech represent the national mind.

The mere fact of a spirit of compromise pervading our language, literature, and institutions, suffices to show that Celtic influence cannot be very potent in any of them. Attempts have been made to prove the English people substantially Celtic ; but if this had been the case their language would have been Celtic also. When an uncivilised nation subdues a civilised one it must either exterminate the vanquished, or assimilate much of their language and institutions. *Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit.* The Normans afford a case in point ; they did not expel or destroy the conquered French, and are consequently found within a generation or two ignorant of their ancestral language and fluent in that of their subjects. Their laws, their manners, their religion, all are changed. Nothing of the kind happens in England. The borrowings from the old British language are indeed extensive, but they nearly all consist of common words, descriptive of ordinary things, and unconnected with any intellectual process. Nothing can more decisively establish the subordinate condition and limited proportion of the British element in the community. The population is further shown to have been, when not pure Saxon, a mingled breed, children of Saxon fathers and British mothers, by the complete dying out of Christianity. Had the original **inhabitants** remained a recognisable Celtic element of the population, in however ignominious a condition of vassalage, vestiges at least, **probably** much more, of their religion must have survived **among** them. We **therefore** feel absolved from any consideration of **Celtic** elements as appreciable factors in the **early** literature of England. **Celtic** monks, indeed, as will be seen, contributed to the civilisation of Northumbria, and thus **indirectly** contributed to the growth of a **Christian** literature in that kingdom, but they infused no recognisable Celtic spirit into it. England (a term used here for convenience sake, but, when not obviously restricted to South Britain, always to be understood as denoting the British Empire) does indeed owe an unspeakable debt to the illustrious Celts who have written in English for the "natural magic" and other specifically Celtic gifts which they have infused into her literature ; while the blending of Celtic with Saxon blood, a comparatively modern phenomenon except in the western districts, has been fortunate for both races. But these circumstances do not affect the substantially Teutonic



and Scandinavian character of the English race and language, or alter the fact that all important modifications of English literature have come not from Celtic but from Latin sources. England and Scotland, with the exception of the Highlands and possibly of Cornwall, remain as essentially Teutonic in blood and speech as Wales continues Welsh. The "Anglo-Celtic race," if such there be, must be sought not in Great Britain, but among the extremely mixed population of Ireland. *Latin language in Britain*

The entire dissimilarity of speech, indeed, must have rendered it impossible for Celts to have bestowed a literature upon the Anglo-Saxons, except through the medium of Latin. Such a literature would have been hardly distinguishable from that actually created by the contact of Saxon converts with Roman clergy; it would have been mainly biblical and ecclesiastical, and devoid of specially Celtic characteristics. Celtic missionaries certainly might have sown the seeds of civilisation during the century and a half which elapsed between Hengist and Augustine, but the inveterate hatred of race appears to have effectually restrained them. Not from the successors of St. Columba or St. Patrick did light come to Saxondom, but from the successors of St. Peter. *Celtic and Anglo-Saxon*

It might have seemed more likely that learning would spring up from the vestiges of Imperial Rome, with which, in their material aspect, Britain continued to be thickly strewn. Many towns which survived into Saxon times had originally been Roman; Roman roads still connected them; Roman fortresses and villas, even if dilapidated, still remained to bear witness to the higher civilisation of the Latin colonist. All these seem to have gone for nothing with the Saxon: in a fine poem of the seventh century, indeed, the minstrel muses among Roman ruins and deplores the magnificence of the past, but without an idea that any link save that of human feeling connects him with it. It must be thought that even before the Saxon's advent, whatever visible traces of Roman dominion might remain, Roman influence was verging towards extinction in Britain. The condition of the remains of several Roman cities at this day attests their destruction by a barbarous people, not Saxon, but probably Pictish or Cymric. It may well be conceived that the Roman residents who escaped would seek security on the Continent,<sup>1</sup> and that their speech would depart with them. Two languages must have existed side by side in Romanised Britain—Latin as the language of refined society, British as the speech of the common people. The former would naturally die out in the absence of any sufficient motive for keeping it up. The transition is certainly most striking. Up to the time of the Roman withdrawal a British gentleman wishing to go beyond the ordinary purposes of life would undoubtedly have expressed himself in Latin. His children, or at all events his grandchildren, would have been unable to express elevated sentiment in any language: unless, indeed, *Romans and Anglo-Saxon*

<sup>1</sup> Ornaments found in the soil of caverns in Yorkshire show that these also formed a refuge for Romans or Romanised Britons.

British was reduced into literary form more perfectly than it can well be thought to have been. How different it might have been if Carausius, near the end of the third century, had succeeded in his bold design of establishing an independent British kingdom! How interesting the speculation whether, if Roman and Celt had been left to work out their destiny without Saxon interference, Britons would at this day be speaking a Romance or a Celtic language! A momentous question had it arisen, for, if united by affinity of speech to the Latin nations of the Continent, we should have been far more obnoxious to foreign influences than has been the case; if, on the other hand, our speech had been Celtic, we should have been cut off from the majority of mankind.

*Christianity  
and Anglo-  
Saxon litera-  
ture*

The man who gave the first decided impulse to the transformation of Anglo-Saxon literature was Pope Gregory the Great, and the day from which it dates is that on which the beauty of the captive Saxon youths extorted from him the world-famous exclamation, *Non Angli sed angeli*. Evidence, nevertheless, is not wanting that Gregory was but, in French phrase, driving in a door already ajar. A century and a half had now elapsed since the first Saxon settlement in Britain (449); and half a century since the death of King Arthur about 544, a date which, even if imaginary as regards the particular event coupled with it by tradition, may be fairly taken to denote that of the final victory of the Saxon over the Celt in South Britain. A generation of comparative tranquillity must have contributed to dim the old ideals; and that these were really obsolescent is shown by the extremely rapid progress of the new religion, and the slight opposition it received from any quarter. Though priests existed among the Saxons, there can have been no endowed hierarchy deeply interested in the maintenance of the ancient order of things; and the success of the missionaries (A.D. 597) was probably promoted by their dissociation from the ancient Celtic church still extant in the unsubdued west and north of Britain, which the Saxons abhorred as inimical and the Roman missionaries as schismatical. While the sole visible token of Christianity among the Saxons prior to the mission of Augustine is the private chapel of Queen Bertha, it is still probable that King Ethelbert and his spouse were far from a solitary instance of the union of heathen husbands with Christian women from beyond sea. In any case, Christianity never made an easier conquest, and the ideals of a converted people never underwent a more complete metamorphosis. It was indeed a displacement of the original centre of gravity when saints and martyrs eclipsed warriors in the popular veneration, and the traditions of Teutons gave way to the traditions of Hebrews, Greeks, and Latins. The natural development of Anglo-Saxon literature was destroyed, and every prognostic concerning it which might have seemed reasonable a century earlier was brought to nought.

*Influence  
of Latin  
learning*

Contemporaneously with this revolution appeared another development of which the Anglo-Saxons could have had no idea, the introduction of



Pope Gregory the Great sends Missionaries to England

*From Anglo-Saxon MS. (tenth century) in the British Museum*

learning. For the first time a classical and hieratic language was brought to their knowledge, a tongue no longer the living speech of any people, but acquaintance with which, and in some measure with its literary monuments, was henceforth to distinguish the man of culture from the mere warrior and the boor. For the first time an erudite caste was established among them, men of the book, deeply demarcated from the rest of the community by costume and rule of life. The monastery was to bring the school in its train, and, ere long, prose literature was to arise among a people who had hitherto known no literature but the poetical. King Ethelbert's instinct had not wholly misled him when he shunned to meet the first missionaries from dread of their incantations, though the spirits they were actually to raise came in another shape than any he could have foreseen. At the time of Augustine's mission the Saxons appear to have had no other written character than runes, understood by so few that they were regarded as magical, and proscribed as such by the missionaries.

*Pre-Christian  
remains of  
Anglo-Saxon*

Before considering the influence of the new creed upon the Anglo-Saxon mind as manifested in its literature, it will be expedient to dispose of the few literary relics of the pre-Christian age. The position of by far the most important of these is anomalous. The epic of *Beowulf*, one of the few commanding peaks of Anglo-Saxon literature, is and is not pre-Christian. Modern criticism, at least, seems almost to have established that it was composed more than a century after the mission of Augustine, and traces of Christianity—perhaps interpolated—are not absent from it. On the other hand, its spirit is that of the old heroic age, it embodies forth unchristened chivalry in its intensest form, it is a near neighbour of the Eddas, and consequently very remote from Bede, Caedmon, and other lights of Christianised Anglo-Saxondom. If the poet really wrote so late as now generally believed, he dwelt spiritually in a romantic past, and cherished ideals extinct among the Saxons, though still flourishing in Scandinavia. His poem, therefore, should be treated rather with reference to its spirit than to the actual date of its composition, even were this absolutely certain. Before examining it, it will be convenient to deal with the inconsiderable fragments of early Anglo-Saxon literature which are probably pre-Christian in every point of view.

*Remains of  
Pre-Christian  
literature*

As in Latin, the earliest written remains of Anglo-Saxon are not literary. They consist mainly of charms, resembling, but surpassing in dignity, the ancient Roman incantations preserved in Cato the Censor's work on agriculture. Being earlier than the knowledge of writing, and transmitted orally from generation to generation, they have come down to us in a mutilated and adulterated form, having been largely interpolated by monastic transcribers in order to eradicate the traces of their original heathenism, which are nevertheless obvious. The earliest, as it would seem to be, is probably the oldest specimen of English extant :—

Hal wes thu, folde, fira modor ;  
 Beo thu growende on Godes faethma ;  
 Fodre gefylled firum to mytte.

Hail to thee, Earth, mother of men ;  
 Be thou fruitful in God's embrace ;  
 Filled with fruit for the good of men.

This and similar invocations must date from a very early period, and were doubtless chanted in Angleland before the emigration to Britain. Poetry unquestionably existed among the Saxons and Angles and kindred German tribes before they came into contact with the Romans, and was an entirely indigenous product, owing nothing to Latin or Celtic influence. It usually took the form of the praise of heroes. Tacitus tells us how in his time the German bards sang the exploits achieved by Arminius a century earlier. It would be most interesting to know whether these songs were contemporary with Arminius, and orally transmitted to a later generation, or whether successions of bards took the subject up anew from age to age. Julian, in the fourth century, found the Alemanni singing heroic lays, which it is to be wished that he had transmitted to us. Priscus, the Byzantine ambassador to the court of Attila, tells us that Attila's deeds were chanted in his presence by his minstrels, whose strains must of course have been contemporary with the events celebrated. But these Ugrian or Mongolian warblings must have been as unintelligible to the Germans as to the Romans, and the insignificant place of the mighty Attila (Etzel) in the *Nibelungen Lied* affords a striking illustration of Horace's *Vivere fortes ante Agamemnona*. Attila is nevertheless mentioned in what is most probably the earliest English poem we possess.

The history of this poem is, notwithstanding, involved in many difficulties. It claims to be the composition of **Widsith**, an assumed name denoting "the far-traveller," and to commemorate the various courts visited by him as an itinerant minstrel. Chief among these is that of Hermanric, King of the Ostrogoths about 375. If Widsith is a real person, and the poem a genuine record of his bygone days, it must have been composed early in the fifth century. He speaks, however, distinctly of his comradeship with the Goths when they were contending "against the bands of Aetla" (Attila). Attila did not become king until 433, so, even allowing that he may have battled against the Goths before coming to the throne, if the passage is really from the pen of a poet who had known Hermanric in 375, Widsith must have attained a great age. It is, perhaps, in favour of the genuineness of the poem that palpable interpolations should occur in several places. If, for example, Widsith had really mentioned Alboin, King of the Lombards, he could not have written until after 568 A.D. So late a date, however, seems irreconcilable with the mention of the Ostrogoths as still settled upon the Vistula, and other geographical details. It is manifest that, while seeming indications of a late date may easily find

their way into an old poem, tokens of antiquity are not likely to be interpolated into a recent one unless with the deliberate purpose of deceit, which seems unlikely here. It is difficult not to be impressed by the apparent sincerity of Widsith's praise of his patrons, and still more difficult to conjecture why a literary imposture should be perpetrated in honour of the deceased sovereigns of an extinct nation two centuries after their death. Widsith, as rendered by Mr. Stopford Brooke, says :—

For a longish time lived I with Eormanric ;  
 There the King of Gotens with his gifts was good to me ;  
 He, the Prince of burg-iddwellers, gave to me an armlet  
 On the which six hundred scats of beaten gold  
 Scorèd were, in scillings reckoned.  
 And another gift Ealdhild gave to me,  
 Folk queen of the doughty men, daughter of Eadwme,  
 Over many lands I prolonged her praise :  
 Whensoe'er in singing I must say to men  
 Where beneath the sky I had known the best  
 Of all gold-embroidered queens, giving lavishly her gifts.

It therefore seems not unlikely that Widsith's lays on the conflicts between the Goths and the Huns really related to those which took place under Hermanric's immediate successors, but that the passage has been altered by a later poet, for whom Attila was the representative of the obliterated Hunnish nation, now passing into the domain of legend. An additional argument for the authenticity of Widsith's poem is the occurrence in it of Slavonic names accepted as real by modern Slavonic scholars.

Apart from the veneration due to so ancient a monument of our tongue, the literary claims of Widsith's poem are but slight. It is chiefly interesting for the picture of the minstrel—sole representative of letters and articulate voice of public opinion—faring from court to court and meeting with honour everywhere—for all have an appetite for praise, and all would fain live in song :—

Always, South or Northward, some one they encounter,  
 Who, for he is learned in lays, lavish in his giving,  
 Would before his men of might magnify his sway.  
 Manifest his earlship. Till all flits away,  
 Life and light together, land who getteth so  
 Hath beneath the heaven high established power.

*Lament of  
Deor*

Another very interesting poem probably belongs to the pre-Christian era, even though it may have undergone modification in form. This is the **Lament of Deor**, an ancient Teutonic bard, perhaps mythical, who bewails his eclipse in popular favour by another bard, Heorrenda, the Horant of the German epic of Gudrun, precisely as, in after ages, Addison and Scott were, as poets, dethroned by Pope and Byron. Deor's behaviour recalls Scott's rather than Addison's; he indulges in no railing against his successful rival, but, unable to rehabilitate himself

by writing Waverley nove's, seeks consolation in true Horatian fashion by summoning up the memories of famous men and women of old who have endured adversity without being overcome by it. The case of each is described in a distinct strophe, with the burden:—"That was withstood; so may this be!" This strophical arrangement and refrain are unique in Anglo-Saxon poetry, and on that account highly interesting: they seem the deceptive foreshadowing of an arrested lyrical development. The piece also possesses charm as a sincere utterance of deep feeling. The half-mythical bard may well impersonate some really wronged or slighted minstrel at an Anglo-Saxon court. The absence of every Scriptural or ecclesiastical personage from his types of misfortune seems almost a proof that, even if the poem did not cross the sea along with the invaders of Britain, it was composed in pre-Christian times.

We have now to treat of the most remarkable of all Anglo-Saxon poems, *Beowulf* and the only one which, though, strictly speaking, but a narrative of adventures, can be considered to approximate to the character of a national epic. A national epic in any strict sense *Beowulf* is not, for neither the scene nor the personages are English. The leading characters are either Danes or Geats (Goths), whose habitation appears to be in the south of Sweden. Yet the poem is justly regarded as Anglo-Saxon and national, for the language is English and the manners depicted are those of the Anglo-Saxons in their ancient seats before their arrival in Britain. Whensoever the poem may have been written, it is, in all respects but one, faithful to the feelings and ideas which obtained at the date of the action, nearly half a century before the conversion of England. The exception is that the poet, though singing heathen times and heathen men in an essentially heathen spirit, is, notwithstanding, himself a Christian, or in any case a heathen whose original work has been manipulated and interpolated by a Christian successor. This tampering is nevertheless so insignificant as scarcely to interfere with the general character of the poem as a noble exhibition of the heroic character as conceived by the northern nations in the fifth century. This prevailing tone of feeling, as well as the probability of its being founded upon heroic lays considerably more ancient than itself, justifies our according *Beowulf* precedence over Caedmon, although, as we shall see, in its present shape it is probably later.

The attempts to make *Beowulf* into a nature-myth appear to us exceedingly fanciful. The questions connected with its authorship are almost as intricate as the similar controversies raised with reference to the Homeric poems. Homer and the Homeridæ were at all events Greeks, and celebrated the exploits of their countrymen. It would be naturally expected that when an epic poet arose in Anglo-Saxon England he would find inspiration in the conquests of Hengist and Horsa. On the contrary, he sings entirely of the Goths, and there is no allusion to anything Anglo-Saxon, unless a mention of the mythical King Offa is designed as a compliment to Offa King of Mercia. It was, therefore,

*Authorship  
of Beowulf*

most natural for the first editors of the poem to regard the poet as an Angle, living in the continental Angleland before the time of the emigration to Britain. This attractive theory, nevertheless, is refuted by irrefragable evidence as to the nationality of the personages, who are evidently Goths and not Angles; by the date of the poem, which, although uncertain, may still be brought lower than the Anglian emigration; and by the Christianising passages, unless these can be absolutely proved to be interpolations.

*Date of  
Beowulf*

There is, fortunately, one historical allusion in *Beowulf* which suffices to afford a *terminus a quo*—a period previous to which it cannot have existed. This is the expedition of King Hygelac against the Frisians, in which he was defeated and slain. Beyond doubt Hygelac is to be identified with Chochilaicus, recorded by Gregory of Tours and in the *Gesta Regum Franciæ* to have been cut off while devastating the lands of the Attuarii, the very tribe (*Het-ware*) mentioned in *Beowulf* as having been attacked by him. This occurred between 512 and 520, and as *Beowulf* is said in the poem to have afterwards succeeded Hygelac's son on the throne, and to have reigned fifty years, the last note of time could not be earlier than about 570, while it would require nearly another century for *Beowulf's* history to become sufficiently mythical for epic poetry. We may therefore conclude with confidence that the poem did not exist even in the shape of detached lays before the middle of the seventh century, and must be considerably later in its present form. From a mention of the Merovingian dynasty in France, which did not become extinct until 752, and the absence of any allusion to any person or event of later date, it would seem reasonable to place it before 750, which does not exclude the possibility of a more recent working up. The only known manuscript is of the tenth century, and is in the Cottonian collection in the British Museum. Discovered among the Cottonian Manuscripts by Wanley in 1705, it was, although indicated by him as *tractatus nobilissimus*, entirely neglected until 1786, narrowly escaping destruction in the partial burning of the Cottonian Library. In 1786, the Danish scholar Thorkelin had a transcript made, which he published in 1815. English and German editors followed, and a miniature literature of translation, commentary, and controversy has grown up around this striking poem, which, in its dissimilarity from almost all other relics of Anglo-Saxon literature and the probability that although English it is not in its original shape the work of an Englishman, occupies among the constituents of this literature a position strikingly analogous to that of the Book of Job in the literature of the Old Testament.

*Composition  
of Beowulf*

The question most warmly debated is whether this poem of three thousand lines is the composition of a single author or is compacted out of a number of separate ballads. The ingenuity of German criticism has of course been strained and overstrained in support of the latter opinion, which is nevertheless in all probability correct in so far as it maintains that the author of the poem as we have it worked upon pre-existent materials.



we perod pearde theas dan

v.

**S**æt þæt stan fah fets fisode sumum  
æ zædne sud byrre scan heard  
hond locen hring men scip song mscap  
pum þa hie tofele furdum in hyra spy  
re sear pum zangan eponon fecton  
sameþe side scyldas roudas regn heard  
pð þæt peceðes peil. buzon þato bence  
byrnan hring don sud searo sumena  
zarnas stodon sæman na searo samod  
æ zædne æc holt uran zruas r æse  
men þreaz pæpnum zepur þad þadæp  
plone hæleð oret mezas æfter hale  
þum pæzn. hpanon perizeað se pæ  
te scyldas spræge sypcan zsum helmas  
hepe scapza heap ic eom hrod zarpes  
ār zombiht. ne seah ic elþeodige þus  
manize men modiglician. penic þ. zæfor  
plen co nalles for pææ fðum. ac forþize

A Page from the MS. of Beowulf in the British Museum

Cott. MS. Vitell. A 15

He must otherwise either have translated his poem directly from some Scandinavian original or have composed it in Anglo-Saxon. The former supposition seems little in keeping with the character of literature in that age; but if the poem were entirely of Anglo-Saxon origin, we should, considering that it cannot be much older than the middle of the eighth century, have expected a more decidedly Christian tone, and a less heroic cast of manners. If the poet neither translated nor invented, he can only have adapted; and it is sufficiently probable that lays celebrating a semi-mythical hero like Beowulf may have existed among Beowulf's people and become known to our anonymous Anglo-Saxon bard. To weave these together would be a simple operation, as they would not be rival versions of the same exploits, but successive episodes of the hero's life. Nor would they be numerous—three or four at most—one of which, the lay of Beowulf's conflict with the fire-drake, stands out so distinctly from the rest that one is almost inclined to regard it as entirely the work of the English poet, prompted by the need of providing his epic with a catastrophe.

*Probable  
character  
and circum-  
stances of  
author*

What manner of man was the Anglo-Saxon author? Most of the critics who have touched upon the question have seemed disposed to regard him as an ecclesiastic, whether priest or monk. He has been conjectured to have been a Saxon missionary to Scandinavia, and regarded as a poet at the court of Offa, King of Mercia, administering instruction in the guise of poetic fiction to that monarch's son. These opinions are contrary to internal evidence. If the author was an ecclesiastic, he was one who had retired into the cloister towards the end of a tempestuous life, and still loved the saga better than the breviary. Had it been otherwise, the references to Christianity must have been more numerous and distinct, and the writer would either have made Beowulf a Christian converting him in his last moments as Boiardo converts Agricane, or, at least, have depicted his paganism as a lamentable blot upon a character otherwise perfect. But manifestly the poet is not one who would rather "ride with Sir Priest than Sir Knight." He has no ecclesiastical proclivities; he never alludes to bell, book, or candle. He has heard and rejoiced in the clash of battle, and to him the victorious champion—i bounty is associated with bravery—represents the perfection of humanity. Nothing is more marked than his affection for the sea: he has clearly made many voyages, which must have been in the company of sea-rovers. He has the sense of its dreadful might and more dreadful capriciousness which nothing but daily and nightly familiarity can give:—

Then we two together were in the sea  
The space of five nights, till flood apart drove us,  
The swelling billows, coldest of storms  
Darkening night, and the north wind  
Boisterous and fierce, rough were the waves;  
The sea-fishes' spirit was then aroused.

Nor has he less love for

The spacious boat,  
The ring-prowed ship, with battle-weeds laden :

for which he is never tired of inventing new epithets.

The vessel groaned,  
Not there the sea-floater did the wind o'er the wave  
In its course hinder : the sea-goer went.  
The foamy-necked floated forth o'er the water ;  
The curvéd-prowed went over the sea-waves  
Until the Geats' cliffs they might descry.<sup>1</sup>

We know from the *Nibelungen Lied* that the hero Folker was a great fighter as well as a great fiddler, and it is not impossible that the writer of *Beowulf* may himself have been a warrior. It is nevertheless more likely that he was a minstrel, who passing, as we have already seen a minstrel pass, from court to court, and chanting the exploits of his royal and princely entertainers, imbibed the spirit of adventure and the command of poetical diction which qualified him to weave the *Beowulf* lays into an epic. It may even be possible to offer a plausible conjecture as to the period and occasion of his work. Strong reasons, derived from names of places and the character of the scenery, have been assigned for holding him to have belonged to Northumbria. Ten Brink, however, declares the dialect to be Wessex of the best period of the language. But this is no real objection, for scribes habitually altered the dialect of the work they copied into that of their own district. A Mercian poet could scarcely have been so familiar with the sea, and the hypothesis that the poem was composed for the instruction of King Offa's son can hardly be sustained ; the didactic purpose must in that case have been more apparent, and Hrothgar's admonitions to the slayer of Grendel would not apply to a young prince who had done nothing to distinguish himself. The introduction of the name of Offa, even as that of a legendary personage, does, nevertheless, appear significant, and taken in connection with the probably Northumbrian origin of the writer, may afford a clue to the history of the poem. Offa the Great, King of Mercia from 757 to 796, in 792 gave one of his daughters in marriage to Ethelred, King of Northumbria. If we may suppose our probably Northumbrian poet to have been a minstrel at Ethelred's court, the introduction of the name of Offa is explained, and a date obtained, not necessarily for the actual composition of the poem, but for the assumption of its ultimate form. There is nothing in the poem inconsistent with such a supposition, for the poet might well have found and left the allusion to the Merovingians in one of the lays which he fused into his own work.

**P** We must now offer a brief analysis of the epic, whose action is simplicity itself. It is a romance of knight-errantry, one of a type dear to

*The most  
probable  
theory*

*Analysis of  
the poem*

<sup>1</sup> This and the preceding extracts are from Professor J. M. Garnett's translation, which of the metrical versions is probably the closest to the original. Of the prose versions Mr. T. Arnold's is the most elegant and Professor Earle's the best annotated.

man from the days of Hercules to the days of Amadis, and still, though giants are pacific and dragons extinct, affording the inspiration of many a novel of modern life. Beowulf's first adventure offers a strong resemblance to the Argonauts' delivery of King Phineus from the Harpies. As Phineus is amerced of his food by these obscene invaders, so is Hrothgar, King of the Danes, deprived of his palace by the demon Grendel, who, if any dare to abide there at night, enters it and rends the inmates to pieces. This fiend is powerfully described, and the more so inasmuch as the description leaves much to the imagination. He seems to be a personification of the horror felt by lonely wayfarers in the miry wilderness which he is supposed to make his home. The Christian editor makes him and his fellows descendants of Cain, but the original conception seems to have been that of something unhuman in everything except shape and carnal tissue. The monster must be fought with naked hands, and the strength of Beowulf himself avails no further than to wrench one arm from its socket. This, however, suffices; Grendel flies to his cave and expires. A fresh action, which has every appearance of the addition of a new episode to the original poem or the incorporation of a separate lay into it, now arises from the interposition of a still more frightful fiend in the person of Grendel's mother, a demon of the sea as he is of the morass.<sup>1</sup> She dwells in a sea-cave accessible only by diving, in close relation, however, to the unhallowed mere which had evidently taken the strongest hold on the poet's imagination. Beowulf, pursuing her to avenge the death of one of Hrothgar's nobles whom she has torn to pieces, is gripped by her and borne to this submarine cavern, where he would have perished but for the excellence of his coat of mail which defies her thrusts, and his own skill and luck in possessing himself of a sword from her own armoury, by which alone she can be despatched. He returns in triumph with the head of Grendel, which four ordinary men can hardly bear, and receives thanks and, at the same time, admonition from Hrothgar in a speech dissuading from arrogance and prompting to liberality, which the poet may well have designed to be perpended by his own patrons. The moral tone throughout is very high: and nothing is more remarkable than the vein of pity blended with abhorrence in the description of the ogres, which indicates a finer spirit of humanity than Homer was able to attain when he drew the Cyclop. The whole story of the hero's overthrow of the demon and his dam must belong to a very ancient stratum of popular legend, for Professor York Powell has shown that it exists in Japanese.

Confirming precept by example, Hrothgar had not omitted to recom-

<sup>1</sup> The figure of the devil's dam or grandmother, so frequent in *Grimm's Tales*, is Celtic as well as Teutonic. In Philip Skelton's description of St. Patrick's Purgatory on Lough Derg, written about the middle of the eighteenth century, he says: "They here show a bas relief of Keeronagh, the devil's mother, a figure somewhat resembling that of a wolf, with a monstrous long tail and a forked tongue." Her legend follows, showing that the carving is not a mere freak of fancy. The idea of the feminine character of the evil principle, indeed, is at least as ancient as the Assyrian mythology.

pense Beowulf with splendid gifts, which Beowulf, on his return to the court of his own sovereign Hygelac, distributes between the king and his nobles, receiving rich bounty from Hygelac in return. An interval of fifty years is now supposed to occur, at the end of which we find Beowulf, advanced in years, but with strength and valour unabated, ruling the kingdom of Hygelac, who, as already mentioned, had perished in an expedition against the Frisians. His reappearance, nevertheless, is in his old character as knight-errant, which he is obliged to resume in consequence of the devastation wrought in his realm by a fiery dragon. The dragon on his part has a good case. The treasure over which he watched has been robbed of a golden cup by one of Beowulf's nobles, and he must have revenge. This hoard, it seems, was not originally entrusted to his keeping, but discovered by him. It was buried long ago by an ancient king, the last of his line, who, in the spirit of Goethe's King of Thule, grudged his treasure to posterity, so bitterly did he feel that "all, all were gone, the old familiar faces." His touching lament breathes a tenderer strain than any other passage in the poem, and may well be incorporated from some other source :—

Hold thee here, O Earth, nor the heroes could not.  
 Hold the wealth of earls ! Lo, within thee long ago  
 Warriors good had gotten. Ghastly was the life-bane  
 And the battle death that bore every bairn away.  
 All my men, mine own, who made leaving of this life !  
 They have seen their joy in hall ! None is left the sword to bear  
 Or the cup to carry, chased with flashes of gold,  
 Costly cup for drinking. All the chiefs have gone elsewhere.  
 Now the hardened helm, high adorned with gold,  
 Of its platings shall be plundered. Sleeping are the polishers,  
 Those once bound to brighten battle-masks for war.  
 So alike the battle sark that abode on field  
 O'er the brattling of the boards, biting of the swords,  
 Crumbles, now the chiefs are dead. And the coat of ringéd mail  
 May far and wide no longer fare with princes to the field  
 At the side of heroes. Silent is the joy of harp,  
 Gone the glee-wood's mirth ; never more the goodly hawk  
 Hovers through the hall ;<sup>1</sup> the swift horse no more  
 Beats with hoof the Burh-stead. Thus, unhappy did he weep  
 In the day and night, till the Surge of Death  
 On his heart laid hold.

The dragon is brilliantly described ; he is a winged, fire-breathing serpent, provided with at least two feet, and an adamantine covering for his head, but his body is soft and penetrable. His great defence consists in the clouds of poisonous fire he breathes forth, which so intimidate Beowulf's

<sup>1</sup> This passage raises an interesting question. The *Encyclopædia Britannica* says that hawking was introduced into England from the Continent about 860, but this mention of domesticated hawks would seem to prove it earlier. If the Scandinavians were not acquainted with it by the eighth century, this portion of *Beowulf* at any rate must be the original work of an Anglo-Saxon poet. We know not what evidence on the point may be attainable ; it is certain that the finest falcons come from Iceland. The Celtic romances are too late or too interpolated to contribute much to the elucidation of the subject.

nobles that all fly but one, who succours his lord, and turns the battle in his favour. But the poison has done its work ; and Beowulf, seeing himself nigh to death, commands his faithful follower to bring forth the dragon's hoard for him to feast his eyes on, and in dying directs his corpse to be burned on a headland, and a barrow heaped up over the remains—

Which may for my folk for remembering of me,  
Lift its head high on the Hrones-ness ;  
That sea-sailing men, soon in days to be,  
Call it 'Beowulf's Barrow,' who, their barks afoam,  
From afar are driving o'er the ocean mists.

This is accordingly done, the treasure is interred with the hero, and the poem which had begun with a sea-funeral, when the body of King Scyld is sent adrift to sea with all his wealth, ends like the Iliad with a solemn cremation.

*Manners of  
the age of  
Beowulf*

*Beowulf* is not only a fine poem, but a most interesting relic of the ideas and manners of the remote past. It shows that the Northern peoples of its age were by no means barbarous, but that even material civilisation was fairly advanced among them ; while, except for the general licence of warring and plundering, their morality was high and pure. Whether a single work or compacted of separate lays, it seems to imply a considerable poetical literature now lost. The authors were men of real poetical genius, who laboured under the disadvantages of paucity of impressions and ideas, diction unrefined by study and practice, and a cramping system of versification. *Beowulf* has not been without influence on later English poetry, Arnold's description of the funeral of Balder, and Morris's of the combats of Jason and his companions with the "ugly, nameless, dull-scaled things," may be distinctly traced back to it ; and the comparison shows that the steady expansion of the human mind by the exercise of thought and the accumulation of knowledge has been hardly less favourable to poetry than to science.

*Episodes in  
Beowulf*

*Beowulf* does not stand quite alone among the Anglo-Saxon poems of the period ; enough, indeed, is left to have rendered probable, even had *Beowulf* been lost, the existence of a considerable romantic and metrical literature which had disappeared in the unheroic atmosphere of later monkish ideals and amid the catastrophe of the Norman Conquest. Among several episodes introduced or alluded to in *Beowulf* in such a way as to suggest that they formed the themes of independent poems, is one—"The Fight at Finnsburg"—on the same subject as another poem apparently of the same period, about fifty lines of which have been preserved. The two pieces help to complete each other. The personages are Jutes and Frisians, those of another fragment are Germans. A vellum binding in the Royal Library at Copenhagen has preserved two passages from an Anglo-Saxon version of *Walthere*, an originally Teutonic romance of the Nibelungen cycle. The German original is lost, but survives in a Latin translation made in the tenth century : the

Anglo-Saxon version, however, is older than this, and direct from the German. These wrecks of a vanished literature, which may have been extensive, show that the Anglo-Saxon gleemen (*scôpas*) were acquainted with the languages and legends of their neighbours, and justify the conclusion that they had not much invention of their own. As they must have been a numerous body, and their hearers must have required variety, their stock of lays was probably large, much larger than was ever committed to writing. They do not appear to have been organised into a guild, or to have been depositories of ritual or mythic lore like the bards of Wales and Ireland: and the story of Caedmon shows that the guests participated with them in the entertainment of the company.

Before proceeding further with the subject of Anglo-Saxon poetry, *Anglo-Saxon metre* it will be convenient to give some account of Anglo-Saxon metre, which cannot be done better than in the words of Vigfusson and Powell (*Corpus Poeticum Boreale*, vol. i. pp. 433, 434). For further details, Schipper's elaborate treatise on English metre may be consulted.

"Every line of old Teutonic poetry is a blank verse divided into two halves by a line-pause which always comes at the end of a word.

"Each half is made up of a fixed number of measures; a measure being a word, or a number of words, of which the first root-syllable is shaped, *i.e.*, forcibly pronounced, as one does in speaking when one wishes to draw attention to a particular word or syllable. In every line two stress syllables at least, one in each half line, must begin with a similar consonant or a vowel.

"In many lines there occur one or more unstressed syllables, which form, as it were, the elastic unmeasured part of the line; these for want of a better term we call slurred syllables, or collectively a slur. It is not meant that these syllables are gabbled over, they may be spoken fast or slow, but that they are redundant or unimportant for the 'make' or structure of the verse, and that they would be less emphasised, and spoken in a less vigorous tone than the rest of the line. There may be one or more slurs in a line.

"When a monosyllabic word is stressed and followed by no enclitic words before the next stress, it is succeeded by a short interval of silence, which we call a rest. Such a monosyllable with its rest is a measure in itself."

It appears then that, like almost all the poetry of primitive nations, *Difficulties of Anglo-Saxon poetry* the structure of Anglo-Saxon poetry was trochaic and alliterative. The Greeks, the Indians, and in modern times the Italians have been enabled to ascend from this lowly plane to rich complication and voluminous harmony of metre, and less gifted nations have had to learn from these. In so doing they have parted with much of their originality, but have gained immensely in variety and flexibility. In estimating the merits of the Anglo-Saxon poets we must remember that they were hampered no less by the imperfection of their metrical system than by the poverty

of their vocabulary. The progress of amendment would have been very tardy if it had not been accelerated by the drastic remedy of subjugation by foreigners on a higher level of culture. If we are correct in our view of the date and locality of *Beowulf*, which, as regards the first point at least, is that generally accepted by modern criticism, we must be the more impressed by the greatness of a poem which, however glossed or interpolated in parts to suit the new belief, stands out in the main as a relic of the past, a grand rough creation of the heroic age, which might well have been contemporary with the events which it professes to celebrate. It is the more impressive from the contrast it affords to the Biblical school of poetry which had grown up since the conversion of the Saxons, and which represented the dominant taste and prevalent feeling of the period. At first sight *Beowulf* seems like a Milton writing in the age of Pope; we shall, however, find reason to conclude that the tradition of the past was not in fact so entirely abolished. There were idyllic poets who stood aloof from Christianity, and fervent believers in Christ as heathen in spirit as any Viking. It will nevertheless be best for the present to devote our attention to the two principal literary names which, whether those of individuals or of schools of composition, adorn the seventh and eighth centuries of Saxon England.

It is an ordinary phenomenon for literature, especially poetical literature, to be for a considerable time confined in its manifestations to a single nook of an extensive country. Ionian Greece in the days of Homer, Sicily and afterwards Tuscany in the early ages of Italian literature, Massachusetts in modern America, are familiar examples. For all these good reasons can be given; but it is not evident why, although the very earliest post-Christian productions of Anglo-Saxon literature—glossaries of merely linguistic interest—appear to proceed from Kent, Anglo-Saxon poetry should for a long period have been almost restricted to Northumbria. The fact—wheresoever *Beowulf* may have been written—seems indubitable. Of the two representative poets of whom we are now to treat, **Caedmon** was certainly Northumbrian, and although there is no direct evidence as respects **Cynewulf**, the maritime descriptions and allusions in the poems written by or ascribed to him almost prove that the author or authors were dwellers by the sea. The most probable explanation of the advanced literary position of Northumbria at the period would seem to be that which connects it with the evangelising exertions of Celtic missionaries. As already remarked, the ancient British churches, estranged by resentment and racial hatred, had done nothing for the conversion of the barbarous invaders before the mission of Augustine. After, however, the example thus shown them, they appear to have discerned where their duty and their interest lay; and the proximity of Northumbria to the great Celtic sanctuary of Iona and the British kingdom of Cumbria, as well as the survival of a Celtic population in some Northumbrian districts, would naturally indicate it as a sphere for missionary effort. It is important to observe

*Northumbrian school  
of poetry*



that the Celtic monks, though employing Latin in the services of the Church, would be much less Latinised than the Italian missionaries in the south. Comparatively exempt from classical influences, they at the same time were by no means animated by a fraternal spirit towards the Romans, and the flight of the Roman Archbishop Paulinus from York in 633 for long left them a clear field. Celtic clergy came to Northumbria in 634 on the invitation of King Oswald, and it was not until 664 that they finally retreated. Under these circumstances, it is comprehensible that Anglo-Saxon literature might grow up in Northumbria while it was elsewhere repressed by the addiction of the reading and writing classes to Latin literature, and that Anglo-Saxon minstrels would feel at liberty to versify Biblical narrative in their own manner. This would seem to have been the extent of the service rendered to Anglo-Saxon poetry by the British clergy: nothing of the visionary and delicately fanciful Celtic cast of thought is to be detected in it at any period.

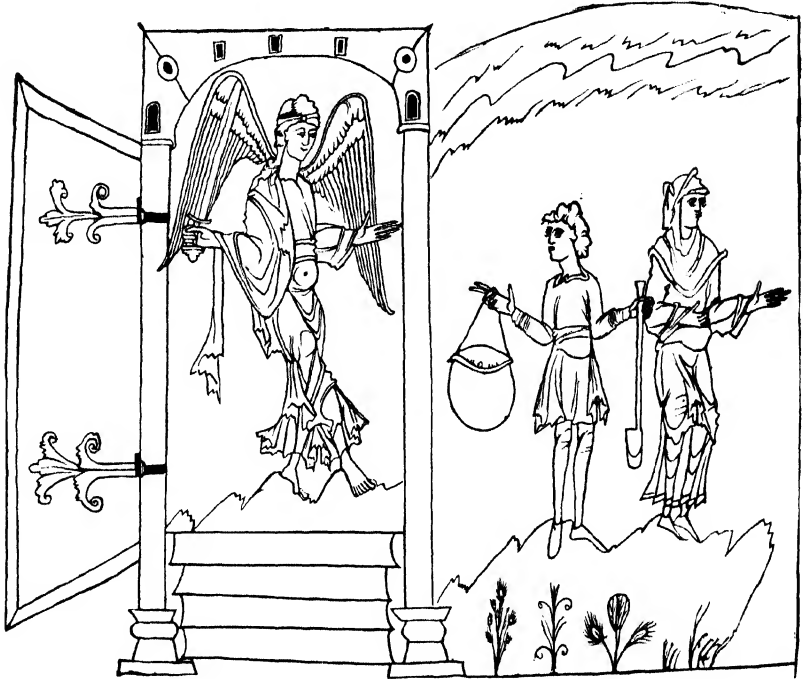
If the circumstances related of Caedmon's initiation into the poetic art are mythical, they at least attest the celebrity of the poems which gave birth to the legend; if, on the other hand, they are authentic, they are a poem in themselves. Whichever view is taken, they at all events serve to show the prevalence of minstrelsy at Anglo-Saxon banquets in the seventh century, and disclose the very interesting fact that the minstrel was not invariably a professional bard, but that music and singing were sufficiently cultivated to warrant the expectation that every guest would be able to bear a part in them. **Caedmon**, Beda tells us, lived nigh the abbey of Streoneshalch (Whitby) in the time of the Abbess Hilda (658-680). A farm servant in all probability, at all events a simple and unlettered man, he was unable to play or sing, and whenever he saw the harp approaching him at a banquet he was accustomed to withdraw in haste. Having on one of these occasions fled from the banqueting-room to the stable where he was engaged in tending cattle, he fell asleep and dreamed that he heard a voice commanding

nurcrlun hq̃z̃ōi heƿeƿađi nicađ uapd mēuđađ mađa gīd hīr mōđ gđanc uq̃c uuld uƿpađuƿe  
 ƿue he uundƿađi huađ ǣdīr ƿitan oƿa fēli dǣ heađ ƿiſt ƿaƿa ełd a bap nū he bōi a lī hōƿe  
 halgƿađōi-θam mēdum gēapd mōng-mnađ uapd ǣdīr ƿc m a fēađ ǣd a f m u m p o l d̃ g r e a l l m a d̃ a z̃  
 ƿƿimo Cantuar Caed mon i fēuđ Cāymađ

Caedmon's Hymn, the oldest Christian poem in Anglo-Saxon  
 From an eighth-century MS. in the University of Cambridge

Caedmon

him to sing. His excuses not being accepted he made the attempt, and to his astonishment found himself hymning the praise of the Creator. On awakening he remembered the verses he had composed, and recited them to the steward under whom he served, who brought him to the Abbess. His poetical gift was duly attested and authenticated, and he spent the remainder of his life in versifying Scripture under the patronage of the abbey. There is really no reason to doubt the substantial veracity of the story; although, were it now possible to investigate the circumstances on the spot, we should probably find that Caedmon was already versed



Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise

*From the Caedmon MS. (tenth century) in the Bodleian Library*

in the Scriptures as an auditor if not as a reader, and that his reluctance to perform his part as a minstrel was rather the effect of timidity than of absolute inability. The endeavour to make him a mythical personage may safely be dismissed. It would be impossible to find a more trustworthy authority than Beda, who was actually the contemporary of Caedmon's latter years.

*Poems attributed to  
Caedmon*

The poetry attributed entirely or in part to Caedmon has come down to us in a single manuscript, discovered by Archbishop Ussher, and now preserved in the Bodleian Library. It nowhere claims to be the work of Caedmon, and the ascription of a large portion of its contents to him by its original editor, Franciscus Junius, is grounded upon their substantial agreement with the description of Beda, who actually gives the general sense

of the exordium in a Latin version sufficiently in accord with the diction of the Bodleian MS. to render it, all discrepancies notwithstanding, nearly certain that he is following the same text. King Alfred, or the translator who worked under his direction, rendering Bede into Anglo-Saxon, gives indeed quite a different text as Caedmon's; but it seems almost certain that, not having the poet himself to refer to, he is merely turning Bede's Latin back into the vernacular. Bede further gives an account of Caedmon's



Anglo-Saxon representation of Musicians  
*From a manuscript Psalter (eighth century) in the British Museum*

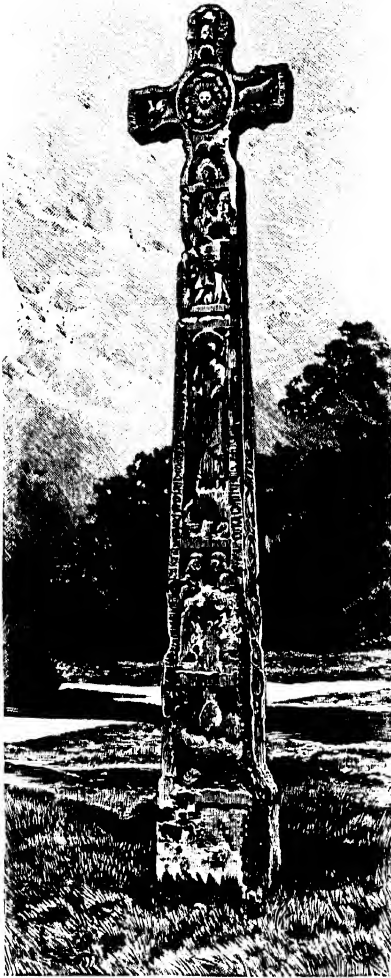
writings which agrees with the contents of the MS. to a considerable extent. He describes them as paraphrases of Genesis and Exodus, "with many other histories of holy writ," also of the New Testament, and of poems on the world to come. So far as Genesis is concerned, the description, with one remarkable exception to be noticed, tallies exactly; and "the other histories" may be thought to be represented by a paraphrase of Daniel, also in the MS. The Caedmonian authorship of the Exodus is questioned on the ground of its superior poetical merit, and the internal evidence it seems to afford of the poet's having been a warrior. The poems contained in the MS. which relate to the New Testament and the invisible world do not agree so well, there are also linguistic variations, and the hand-

writing is that of a different scribe. There seems, therefore, good reason for concluding that *Genesis*, with one important exception to be named immediately, and possibly *Exodus* and *Daniel*, were written by Caedmon ;

and the other pieces by poets of his school, who, Bede says, were numerous.

The exception we have noted to the generally Caedmonian authorship of the *Genesis* is the remarkable history of the Temptation of Adam and Eve, commonly known as "*Genesis B*," which it is difficult to believe unknown to Milton. Critics are nearly unanimous in regarding it as improbable that this striking poem should have been written by the paraphrast of *Genesis* and *Exodus*, and the improbability is increased by its evident relation to the old German poem of the *Heliand*, written in the eighth century, whose author was sufficiently erudite to have been indebted to the Latin poems of Avitus, Bishop of Vienne. The *Heliand* ("Saviour") is of course solely concerned with the New Testament, but seems to imply a corresponding poem on the Old, existing at present solely in the Anglo-Saxon fragment known as "*Genesis B*." In any case this is at least two centuries later than Caedmon. As might be expected, the gentle diffident minstrel, whose doubts and fears kept him back from song for half a century, excels chiefly in tender passages, such as the following description of the Dove and the olive-tree,

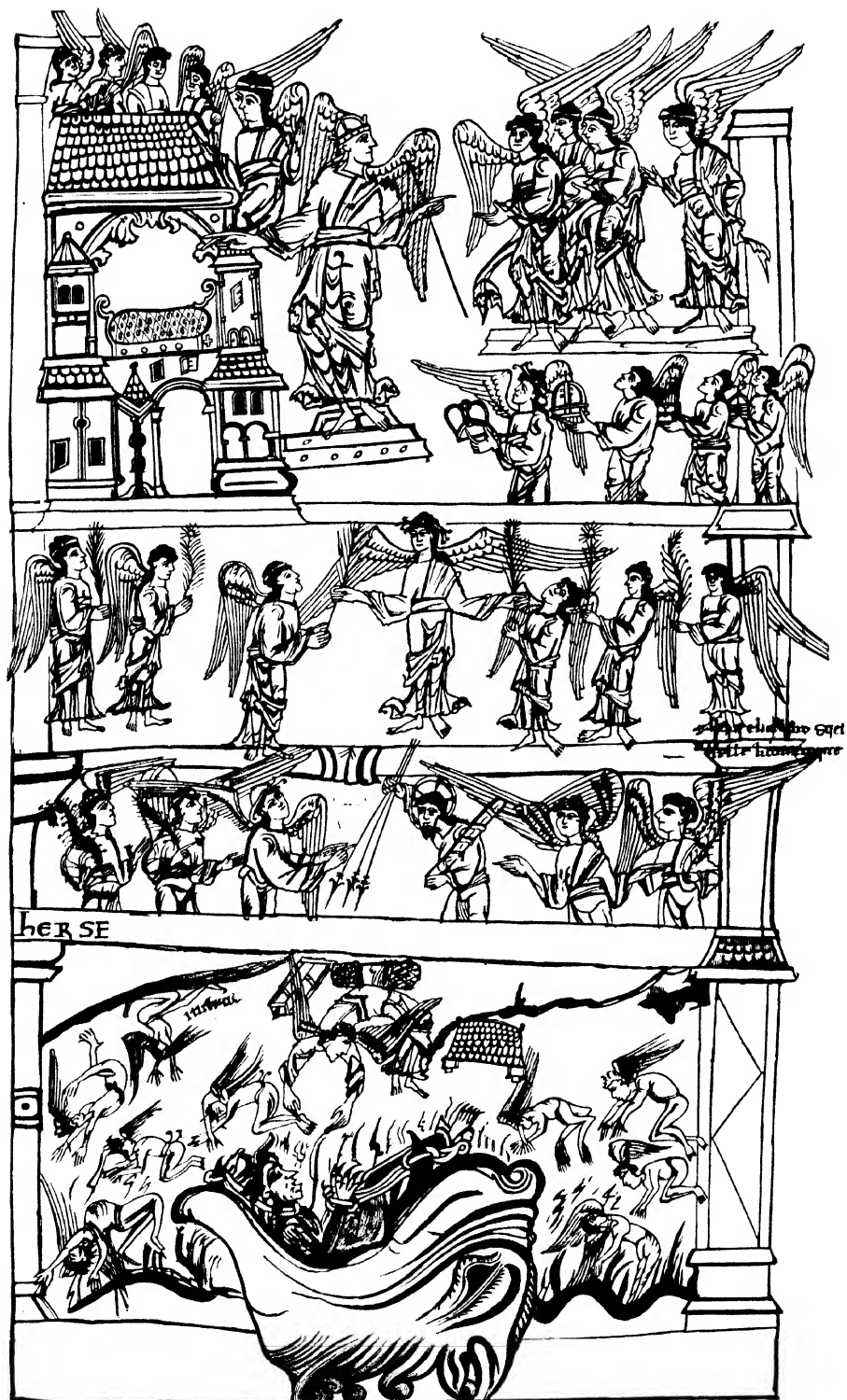
*Poem on the  
Temptation*



Ruthwell Cross

thus rendered by Mr. Stopford Brooke :—

Far and wide she flew,  
Glad in flying free, till she found a place  
Fair, where she might rest. With her feet she stept  
On a gentle tree. Gay of mood she was and glad,  
Since she, sorely tired, now could settle down,  
On the branches of the tree, on its bearing mast  
There she fluttered feathers, went a-flying off again,



Defeat of the Bad Angel

*From Caedmon M.S. (tenth century) in the Bodleian Library*

With her booty flew, brought it to the sailor,  
 From an olive-tree a twig, right into his hands  
 Brought the blade of green.

This is pretty and tasteful embroidery, but the poet does not invent; he simply amplifies and adorns the matter before him. The poet of the Temptation and the Fall, however indebted he may be to Avitus for hints, shows true original genius in his additions to his text; his pictures of Satan bound in the infernal regions, of the loyalty of the infernal retainer who performs the errand to Eden at his lord's behest, and of the subtlety by which Eve is overcome. Unlike Milton, he conceives of Satan as so straitly fettered in the deeps of hell as to be unable to put his designs against the human race into execution by his personal efforts, and compelled to solicit the aid of one of his *thanes*. The immense loss in sublimity which this involves is almost compensated by the closeness to human nature:—

If I to any thane  
 lordly treasure  
 in former times have given  
 while we in the good seats  
 blissful sate;  
 at no more acceptable time  
 could he ever with value  
 my bounty requite.  
 If men for this purpose  
 any one of my thanes  
 would himself volunteer

that he from here upward  
 and outward might go;  
 might come through these barriers,  
 and strength in him had  
 that with raiment of feather  
 his flight he could take,  
 and whirl through the welkin,  
 where the new work is standing  
 —Adam and Eve  
 in the earthly realm  
 with wealth surrounded—

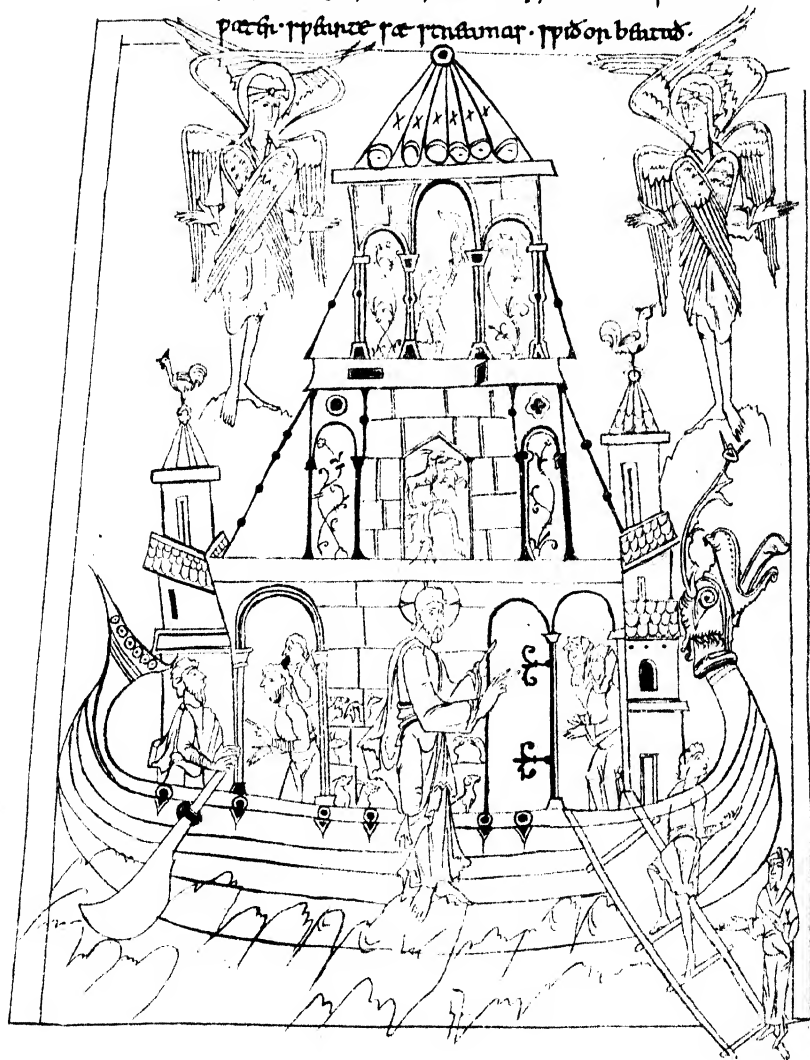
and we are cast away hither  
 in these deep dales !

Keats justly eulogises Milton for placing vales in hell, but it will be seen that the Anglo-Saxon poet had been beforehand with him.

When the contents of the Bodleian MS. were given to the world by Franciscus Junius they were unaccompanied by any Latin version, and Milton's sight had failed him. Yet it is hardly possible to believe him unacquainted with a poem from which he continually seems to be borrowing, while he no less continually improves it. Nothing could be more natural than for Junius to present his book to the Commonwealth's Latin Secretary, and when Milton, his mind fraught with his growing epic, discovered that the volume contained a poem on the same subject, he would assuredly seek and find an interpreter. Considering the naturalisation—far more complete than in any other country—which the Bible was to undergo in England, and the extent to which English literature was to be permeated by it, the derivation of the earliest Anglo-Saxon poems from the Scriptures is a phenomenon of the deepest significance.

The authorship of the Exodus poem presents a problem. The spirit certainly seems too martial for the author of *Exodus*, but on the other hand we have Bede's distinct testimony that Caedmon did compose a para-

Noe preme. ppa hine nengtho helc. hynde þam hal  
 gan. hiton cyming ongan. ofortlice þi hop pyncan.  
 micle mæte astet. magu in fuge. þiæt þeallic þing  
 þeowum tofild. se ðe wite. hie ne noldon þæt. ge  
 fah þa ymb pinra for. pæn fæst mæd. geþon  
 hura mæst. gano hlypstan. innan gatan. forðan  
 lute. gefastod þis folde. for. nof. þy felftan.  
 þi synodig cynn. Symle bið þy hlandra. þe hie mæh  
 pæti. ppa nce fæ fæstmar. ppa on bærð.



From a MS. of Caedmon's Hymn.

[Bodleian Library, Oxford.]





phrase of Exodus, and it seems scarcely possible that the work of an author of such celebrity should have been extinguished by an anonymous writer. On the whole it appears safest to attribute the poem to him. The Daniel is more dubious.

The poems on New Testament history or legend comprised in the Bodleian MS. are considerably later than the genuine Caedmon, if the paraphrases of Genesis and Exodus are rightly attributed to him. They manifest the same independence and invention as the poem on the Fall in the Old Testament series, and may well be attributed to its author. The spirit is totally unlike that which Bede would lead us to ascribe to Caedmon; it is vindictive, unchristian, and far below the substantially heathen Beowulf. They consist of several poems, on the Fall of the Angels, the Temptation of Christ, the Harrowing of Hell, the Resurrection, and other subjects from the New Testament, welded into one by the transcriber. *The Dream of the Holy Rood* has been ascribed to Caedmon in consequence of some lines from it being engraved on the Ruthwell Cross with the statement "Cadmon wrought me," but this clearly refers to the sculptor, and the poem is almost certainly by Cynewulf or one of his disciples. There remains a considerable fragment of an elaborate poem on the history of Judith, which has been ingeniously conjectured to have been composed in compliment to Queen Judith, Ethelwulf's wife and Alfred's stepmother, but is more probably a production of one of Caedmon's Northumbrian group some time in the eighth century. Some have deemed the author but mediocre as a poet; others have judged his work more favourably; and their opinion, we think, will be deemed fully confirmed by the brilliant translation of Professor Oliver Elton in the volume of essays published in 1900 in honour of Dr. Furnivall. This, by the favour of Professor Elton and the Delegates of the Clarendon Press, we are enabled to cite at full length, and it will be found a perfect specimen of the average style of Anglo-Saxon poetry:—

*Poems erroneously ascribed to Caedmon*

Large is the face of our world, but she loosed not trust in His gifts,  
And sure was the sheltering grace of His hand, in her sharpest call  
To the Prince, who presides, far-famed, in the height, to protect her now  
From the worst of the Fear: and the Lord of His creatures willed her the boon  
For her fulness of faith in the glorious omnipotent Father enskied.  
And the heart grew fain, as I heard, within Holofernes the king,  
And he sent forth a bidding to wine, a banquet of bravery measureless  
For all the eldest of thanes in the orders of shielded fighters,  
And the chiefs of the folk came quick to that mighty captain of theirs.

*Translation  
of "Jwaith"*

And fourth was the day since the fairly-radiant  
Damsel had sought him, the deep-coloured Judith;  
And they fared to the feast, his fellows in sorrow,  
And with lust of the wine-cup uplifted was every  
Breast of the warrior in battle-mail.

And they bore down the benches the beakers lofty  
Full cups and flagons for feasting in hall;  
And the soldiers seized them, the strong men in bucklers,

Who were scaled—and their sovereign saw not—to death.  
 And the giver of gold was gay with the revel,  
 Holofernes, the fear and the friend of his carls,  
 And he laughed aloud, and hallooed and shouted  
 In fierceness of mood, and far the tempestuous  
 Clamour was caught by the children of mortals  
 As mad with the mead-cup he monished them often  
 To bear themselves bravely at board and be men  
 Curst was his soul, and his company doughty he  
 Drowned in their drink while the daylight held,  
 And he whelmed them in wine, the warriors all,  
 Till they lay at the last like dead men stricken, in languor lapped,  
 With good things gorged by their valorous giver of treasure. And he  
 Saw they were served as they sat in the feast-hall  
 Till dusk had descended nigh on the world.  
 And he bade them, that soul of all sins commingled,  
 To bring to his bed the blest among women,  
 Bracelet-laden, and lordly with rings.  
 And swiftly his servants set to the will of  
 The mailed ones' master, and made in a flash  
 To the guest-room of Judith, of judgement deep.  
 And they found her, and fetched the fairest of ladies  
 To his tall-arched tent, the targeted warriors,  
 Where the lord Holofernes, the loathed of the Saviour,  
 Slept through the nights ; and encircling the couch  
 Was a curtain all netted of comeliest gold  
 For the captain of war and contriver of harms  
 To watch on the warriors that went to his chamber,  
 And be noted by none that came near him of mortals  
 Whom he called not in quest of their counsel himself,  
 The prince in his pride, from the proven in battle.

And they carried unto his couch the woman whose cunning was sure,  
 And the mind of the men was o'ercast as they went to their master with word  
 That the heavenly maid had been brought to the bower ; and he, their lord  
 The leader of cities, the famous, was stirred to laughter of heart,  
 And was fain to defile the bright one and tarnish her fairness. God,  
 Wielder of war-men, and Guardian of might, and Awarder of fame,  
 Kept the king from his deed, and let not the crime betide.  
 Then his heart was hot with his lust, and he went, the hellish of soul,  
 Mid the press of his princes, along to his bed, where the pride of his life  
 Was to finish before the morn , not soft was the fortune here  
 Of the monarch of many, the puissant of soul, but meet for his works  
 On earth done under the sky, and his mind was empty of wit  
 As he stumbled to sleep his fill, the chieftain sodden with wine.

Then strode the soldiers straight from the chamber,  
 Drenched in their drink , they had drawn the detested one,  
 False to his faith and fell to his people, the  
 Last time on earth to his lair, in haste.

And the handmaid of God in her heart took counsel  
 Swiftly to slay, as he slumbered, the terrible  
 Lecher unclean, for her Lord ; and His maiden  
 With coiling tresses, caught from its scabbard  
 A sword that was scoured unto sharpness of temper ;  
 And next she besought by His Name the Redeemer of

Men upon earth by His might in the firmament :  
 Chief of Thy creatures and Child of Omnipotence,  
 Spirit of comfort and Star of the Trinity,  
 Give me Thy grace in my greatness of trouble.  
 For my heart is afire within, and my soul is heavy, and sore  
 Sunken in sorrow ; be mine of Thy grace, O Sovereign above,  
 Conquest, and keenness of faith that my sword shall cut him in twain,  
 Murder's minister yonder ! And mighty One, Master of all,  
 Glory-allotter to men, and great in Thy majesty, now  
 Favour and save me, of mercy, in this my fulness of need ;  
 Wreak for the wrath and the flame of my soul a repayment. And soon  
 He in the highest who sits made sharp her heart in its strength,  
 As He may for us men who entreat Him aright and with meetness of faith ;  
 And the heart of the holy maid was enlarged, and her hope made new.

And hard she haled by the hair the idolater  
 Deadly and hateful, and dragged him disdainfully  
 Forth to her featly, to fall at her mercy.  
 And the sword of the maiden with sinuous tresses  
 Flickered and fell on the furious-hearted  
 Bane of his foes, bit into his neck-bone.  
 And drunken he lay there, drowned in a stupor,  
 And life in him lingered, though large was his wound.  
 And she smote with the strength of her soul once more  
 At the heathenish hound, and the head rolled over  
 Forth on the floor ; and the filthy carrion  
 Lay on the bed without life ; but the spirit had  
 Fared away far in the fathomless underworld,  
 To be hampered in hell-pains and humbled eternally,  
 Wreathen with serpents in regions of torment,  
 Fettered and fast in the flame of perdition.  
 He has done with our life ; nor dare he have hope  
 In the heart of the dark habitation of dragons  
 Thence to depart, but he there must abide  
 In that dwelling of dimness, undawned on of joy,  
 Ever and ever for infinite ages.

The other important group of Anglo-Saxon Christian poetry, inferior in antiquity and legendary interest to the Caedmonian collection, but not in poetical merit, is that associated with the name of Cynewulf. The circumstances under which these poems have reached us are analogous to those which have preserved Caedmon. They exist in two manuscripts, the Exeter MS. of Anglo-Saxon poetry given by Bishop Leofric to Exeter Cathedral in 1046, and treasured there ever since, and a similar MS. in the cathedral library at Vercelli, discovered in 1832. The poems in the two MSS. are not the same, and we should have no clue to the authorship of any of them but for the fortunate and simultaneous discovery of Mitchell Kemble and Jacob Grimm, afterwards completed by Professor Napier, that runic letters interwoven with the text of two of the Exeter poems, the *Crist* and the *Juliana*, and two of the Vercelli poems, the *Elene* and the *Andreas*, more commonly called the *Fata Apostolorum*, for the poem usually so entitled is in fact but a fragment of it, disclose the name of Cynewulf. A similar cryptogram has been detected by some in a collection of metrical riddles and gnomic verses,

*Poems of  
 Cynewulf  
 and his school*

some highly poetical, also preserved in the Exeter book, but this has been disputed by others, and cannot be regarded as fully established. Such of them, nevertheless, as do not too manifestly savour of an earlier age, may

**H**ÆT ƿæppan on ƿƿan dæġ ƿælfes undaſ tung  
 lum ƿiſadga heles. ƿædga ƿgaſ. no hƿa ƿƿæ.  
 aled. can ƿædga. ƿon cumber hneſan. syððan hie ge  
 deoldon ſƿa him dƿihte ƿælfes hæppa heah cy.ing. ly  
 ge deſce. ƿƿæron mære mæn oƿa ƿiſdæn ƿrome ƿol.  
 togan ƿƿƿid hƿate ƿoſe ƿunear ƿon ƿoðs ƿiand on hie  
 ƿeða. helm ƿalgedon. on mærcuð ƿanſe ƿæſ hƿia machaſ  
 ƿum. ge mæd iudum on gan god ƿpell aſſe. ƿoƿum ƿƿutan  
 ƿundor. ƿæſe. ƿan halig god hlyc geſceode. ut on ƿæſ ƿland  
 ƿæſ æng ƿæſe æll ƿædga. ælſ ne mæn. blaðſ  
 bƿucan. oƿe him bonða hand on hie ƿeða. l. ƿæde  
 geſceode æl ƿæſ ƿæſ mære land moſdne be ƿunden.  
 ƿædga. ƿæne ſole ſeðe gumtha heles æl naſ ƿæſ  
 hlaſe ƿiſe. ƿiſum on hūm ƿanſe. ne ƿæſe dƿiſe  
 to bƿucan. æl hie blod ƿæſ ƿiſa ƿæſe homan  
 ƿæppan cumber. ƿæſ geand ƿa ƿæde. ƿæſe ƿæſ  
 ƿæſ hƿia. ƿæſe æl hƿiſe æll ƿædga. dydan  
 him to moſe mæſ ƿæppan. ƿæſe ƿæſe æl and ætan  
 ƿoſe. ƿæſe ƿæſe ƿæſe ƿæſe ƿæſe ƿæſe ƿæſe ƿæſe  
 ƿæſe. ƿæſe æl and ætan. hieðe hieðe gumtha.  
 hieðe gumtha. æl and ætan. ƿæſe ƿæſe ƿæſe ƿæſe  
 him geblondan bƿiſe to ƿomne. dƿiſe ƿiſe ƿæſe  
 ƿæſe. dƿiſe æl and ætan. ƿæſe ƿæſe ƿæſe ƿæſe  
 ƿæſe hieðe hieðe. hieðe ƿæſe on cƿiſe. ƿæſe ne  
 mæn and ætan. hieðe mæn dƿiſe. hieðe hieðe gumtha.  
 æl hie hie ƿæſe. ƿæſe mæn laſe. mæn geſeðe.  
 ƿæſe ƿæſe machaſ to ƿæſe mæn bƿiſe cumber in ƿæſe  
 æl and ætan. ƿæſe mæn geand mæn donia mæn  
 ƿæſe hieðe. ƿæſe hieðe ƿæſe ƿæſe ƿæſe ƿæſe ƿæſe

Facsimile of Anglo-Saxon MS. of Eleventh Century

From the Cathedral Library at Vercelli

very well be youthful productions of Cynewulf. He may also be the author of *The Dream of the Rood* in the Vercelli book, and perhaps of the *Phoenix*, a paraphrase of the poem ascribed to Lactantius, supplying the deficient Christian application, and of the long and important poem on the life of St. Guthlac in the Exeter MS. The *Andreas*, a long poem on the fabulous adventures of St. Andrew and St. Matthew in *Mermedonia*, and the other poems in the two MS. books, may be attributed to poets of Cynewulf's school.

In the *Elene*, which is undoubtedly Cynewulf's, he has fortunately related some particulars of himself, enabling us to fill up what would otherwise be the merest outline of a shadowy figure. He had been, he tells us, devoted in his youth to the chase and the banquet and worldly pleasures, but in his old age had become studious, religious, and meditative: also, we must

suppose, though he does not expressly say so, sufficiently erudite to study ecclesiastical legends at first hand. He had, as a young man, been rewarded with golden gifts for his songs, which we must take to have been his own composition, and whose loss is greatly to be deplored. It would be natural that his serious mood and advanced age should lead him to the shelter of a monastery; but the Kenulphus, Abbot of Peterborough,

with whom Kemble and Thorpe identify him, flourished at least two centuries later. There can be little doubt that the poet wrote about the middle of the eighth century, and that his home was Northumbria. As already observed, the existence of his poems as we now have them in the Wessex dialect is no objection to the latter supposition, since the transcriber invariably employed his own form of speech. It is a striking proof of the decay of Anglo-Saxon literature after the Danish invasion that the poems of so remarkable a writer should exist only in a single copy, the Exeter and Vercelli MSS. not containing the same pieces, and that, but for the precaution of a cryptogram, his name would be entirely unknown.

Cynewulf is undoubtedly a fine poet. He has two especial notes, earnestness and subjectivity. He feels intensely what he writes, and whether describing an event or a piece of scenery after Scripture, or dealing in exhortation, or expressing his own feelings, always labours to make his utterance as energetic as possible. Though seldom speaking in his own person, he is full of personal feeling: and, as remarked by Mr. Brooke, views his landscape in the hue cast upon it by his own fleeting emotions. In this he entirely differs from Caedmon, who is purely objective. A great step had thus been taken; had a second Cynewulf appeared to carry poetry beyond the sphere of biblical and ecclesiastical history, England might have led Europe in the paths of poetry. There were, as we shall find, decided evidences in the eighth century of an elegiac tendency that had almost ripened into lyric, and it is by no means improbable that such a genius might have arisen, but for the calamities which desolated Northumbria towards the end of the eighth century.

*Poetical genius  
of Cynewulf*

Cynewulf's most important poem is the *Crist*, a metrical narrative of the leading events of Christ's ministry upon earth, including his return to judgment, which is treated with much grandeur but also with great prolixity. The following passage, in Mr. Gollancz's version, is an average specimen of the poem:—

Now 'tis most like as if we fare in ships  
On the ocean flood, over the water cold,  
Driving our vessels through the spacious seas  
With horses of the deep. A perilous way is this  
Of boundless waves, and there are stormy seas  
On which we toss here in this feeble world  
O'er the deep paths. Ours was a sorry plight  
Until at last we sailed unto the land,  
Over the troubled main. Help came to us  
That brought us to the haven of salvation,  
God's Spirit-Son, and granted grace to us  
That we might know e'en from the vessel's deck  
Where we must bind with anchorage secure  
Our ocean steeds, old stallions of the waves.

After the *Crist*, the most important of the undoubted poems of Cynewulf is the *Elene*, on the Invention of the Cross by the Empress Helena, a piece so full of dramatic incident that it might easily have been converted

into a miracle play. The other two have less poetical merit than some of the doubtful poems, especially the second part of the *Guthlac* and the *Andreas* and *The Dream of the Rood*. The *Andreas*, indeed, is a poem of rare spirit, which might almost be called a Christian Beowulf, and founded upon a Greek legend of the adventures of St. Matthew and St. Andrew in *Mermedonia*, which, in the author's time, must have also existed in a Latin version. This, as we have seen, is attributed to Cynewulf in the MS. There seems nothing in any of the other pieces actually compelling us to ascribe them to another hand; in the absence, however, of any direct authentication, it is perhaps safest to regard them as vestiges of an eighth-century school of Northumbrian sacred poetry, such as may well have arisen around a master like Cynewulf.

General  
characteristics  
of Anglo-  
Saxon poetry

The general character of Anglo-Saxon Christian poetry of the period before Alfred is excellently conveyed by its French historian. It is, M. Jusserand points out, essentially Northern and Teutonic. "The full infusion of the Latin element, which is to transform the Anglo-Saxons into English, will take place several centuries hence, and will be the result of a last invasion. The genius of the Teutonic invaders continues nearly intact, and nothing proves this more clearly than the Christian poetry composed in the native tongue, and produced in Britain after the conversion. The same impetuosity, passion, and lyricism, the same magnificent apostrophes which gave its character to the old pagan poetry are found again in Christian songs, as well as the same recurring alternatives of deep melancholy and noisy exultation. The Anglo-Saxon poets describe the saints of the Gospel, and it seems as though the companions of Beowulf stood again before us. One of them, St. Andrew, arrives in an uninhabited country; not a desert in Asia, nor a solitude in Greece; it might be the abode of Grendel. 'Then was the saint in the shades of darkness, warrior hard of courage, the whole night long with various thoughts beset; snow-bound the earth with winter casts; cold grew the storms, with hard hail showers; and rime and frost, the hoary warriors, locked up the dwellings of men, the settlements of the people; frozen were the land with cold icicles, shrunk the water's might; over the river-streams the ice made a bridge, a pale water-road.'"

North-  
umbrian  
"unstrely"

There was no want of poetical spirit among the Northumbrian bards of the eighth century. If their performances were not more distinguished, the causes were the rudeness and poverty of the language, the want of adequate metrical structure, and, above all, the general restriction of the poets' themes to a narrow cycle. The time for engrafting foreign forms and naturalising foreign diction had not arrived, and the poets could only make the best of the resources they had. In speaking of the monotony of a literature whose themes were almost exclusively biblical or ecclesiastical, we are proceeding, as we must, by the maxim *de non apparentibus*. It is not improbable that a copious secular literature may have existed which the monastic transcribers, alone empowered to grant passports for



St. Luke

*From the Gospel Book of St. Augustine in the Library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge*

posterity, did not care to preserve. Cynewulf appears to have been a minstrel all his life, and it is not probable that his gay youth was devoted to the composition or recital of poems like his *Crist*. If, however, he and his companions chanted the deeds of heroes in the fashion of the singer of Beowulf, their lays have perished for want of a penman. Some specimens of what may be termed domestic poetry alone remain to attest that the books of nature and humanity were not entirely neglected for the tomes of ecclesiastical legend.

*Elegiac poems*

The beginnings of a school of poetry which might have become great, and perhaps did actually attain a greatness which we are unable to estimate in the wreck of vernacular secular literature, appear in a few elegiac poems of the period, *The Ruin*, *The Wanderer*, *The Seafarer*, *The Husband's Message*, *The Wife's Complaint*. These have an interest beyond their intrinsic poetical merit as proofs that two of the most distinctive characteristics of English poetry have been present with it from the very first—thoughtful melancholy and the love of nature. *The Ruin*, a meditation upon the relics of some desolate Roman city, which the allusions to the hot springs almost proves to have been Bath, reaches out a hand to Caius Marius on one side and to the author of *Love among the Ruins* on the other :—

Brilliant were the burg-steads, burn-fed houses many ;  
High the heap of hornéd gables, of the host a muckle sound,  
Many were the mead-halls, full of mirth of men,  
Till the strong-willed Wyrd whirled all that to change.  
In a slaughter wide they fell, woeful days of bale came on,  
Famine-death fortook fortitude from merr ;  
All their battle-bulwarks bare foundations were !  
Crumbled is the castle-keep ; these have cringed to earth  
Who set up again the shrines. So the halls are dreary,  
And this courtyard's wide expanse. From the raftered woodwork  
See, the roof has shed its tiles. To ruin sank the market-place,  
Broken up to barrows ; many a brave man there,  
Glad of yore and gold-bright, gloriously adorned,  
Hot with wine and haughty, in war-harness shone ;—  
Saw upon his silver, on set gems and treasure,  
On his welfare and his wealth, on his winsome jewels,  
On this brightsome burg of a broad dominion !  
There the stone courts stood ; hotly surged the stream,  
With a widening whirling ; and a wall enclosed it all  
With its bosom bright. There the baths were set  
Hot within their heart ; fit [for health] it was !

A similar note is struck in *The Wanderer*, which indeed appears to plagiarise from *The Ruin*. Melancholy and love of nature are beautifully combined in a passage in *The Husband's (or Lover's) Complaint* :—

Soon as ever thou shalt listen on the edges of the cliff  
To the cuckoo in the copse-wood, chanting of his sorrow,  
Then begin to seek the sea, where the sea-mew is at home ;  
Sit thee in the sea-bark, so that to the southward  
Thou mayest light upon thy lover, o'er the ocean pathways  
Where thy Lord with longing looks and waits for thee.



More remarkable still is the passion for the sea, prophetic of the future naval glory of the race. In the *Scafarer*, the old mariner, after a most discouraging description of the hardships he has himself undergone in a maritime life :—

All the glee I got me was the gannet's scream,  
And the swoughing of the seal, 'stead of mirth of men,

comes back to acknowledge that

Yes, so haughty of his heart is no hero on the earth,  
Nor so good in all his giving, nor so generous in youth,  
That he has not always yearning unto his seafaring.  
To whatever work his Lord may have will to make for him.  
For the harp he has no heart, nor for having of the rings,  
Nor in woman is his weal, in the world he's no delight,  
Nor in anything whatever save the tossing of the waves,  
O for ever he has longing who is urged towards the sea.

Not other is the note of this old poet hymning the spell of the sea than that of the modern when he sings the yearning for ideal beauty :—

Wer die Schönheit angeschaut mit Augen  
Ist dem Tode schon anheimgegeben,  
Wird für keinen Dienst auf Erden taugen,  
Und doch wird er vor dem Tode beben.  
Wer die Schönheit angeschaut mit Augen.

Such poetry undoubtedly springs from maritime Northumbria, and Mr. Stopford Brooke's theory of its origin is probably correct: "I conjecture that in the first twenty or thirty years of the eighth century there were poets living in the courts of the princes and earls of Northumbria, who were Bohemian enough, if I may be permitted that term, not to care for anything but poetry; to whom Christianity was a good thing, but over whom it had no special hold; who were half pagan at heart while Christian in name; and who resembled, but only in the general temper of their minds, the class of literary men whom the Renaissance made in Florence and Rome. It was this class who wrote, I think, these elegies, and it is probable that there were a great many more poems of this kind."

The habit of mind thus attributed to these poets would have aided them to excel in Latin composition; but, save for the borrowings of ecclesiastical poets from Latin hymns, which affect the substance rather than the form of their compositions, and the paraphrase of the *Phænix* of Lactantius attributed to Cynewulf, there is little trace of classical influence upon the Anglo-Saxon verse of the age. In prose, on the other hand, Anglo-Saxon was almost swallowed up by Latin. The Latin literature of England does not, strictly speaking, fall within our province; but two Latin authors, at least, are too conspicuous as intellectual lights of the time to be omitted from a survey of English literary history.

*Latin literature in Anglo-Saxon England*

It was one of the chief benefits conferred by Christianity upon

*Monastic  
education.  
Aldhelm*

England to have brought schools into the land. There had previously been no organised system for imparting knowledge, every man picked



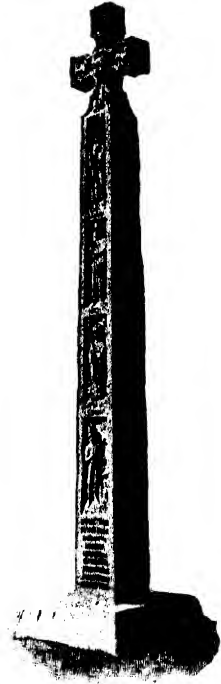
Beginning of St. Luke's Gospel

*From the Lindisfarne Gospel-book in the British Museum*

*Beda  
Alcuin*

up what he could where he could. Christianity brought in a class of priests and coenobites, who by the very condition of their existence were bound to know something, and for whose education it was necessary to make some sort of provision. Every monastery thus became a school,

with more or less of a library appended, and in some cases a centre for the multiplication of books and the study of calligraphy. When (A.D. 668) Theodore came over from Rome as archbishop, he established schools at Canterbury, which imparted not only religious but secular knowledge. There **Aldhelm, Abbot of Malmesbury**, and afterwards Bishop of Sherborne, received his education, and qualified himself to write Latin books which, though of little value in our day, gained him the fame of extensive learning in that darkest hour of Europe's intellectual night. "The leader of that noble series of English scholars who represent the first endeavouring stage of recovery after the great eclipse of European culture" (Earle). The vernacular poems attributed to him by Alfred, which he is said to have recited in public to allure men to listen to his preaching, are unfortunately lost. A more famous author and ecclesiastic, **Beda the Venerable**, owed his erudition to the library with which his tutor, Benedict Biscop, had enriched the monastery of Jarrow, where Beda's blameless and laborious life was chiefly spent. That this library, to collect which Benedict had thrice travelled to Rome, must have been extensive is apparent from the numerous quotations from obscure writers made in Beda's works: and his own writings contributed not a little to increase it. So active was his pen that he himself enumerates thirty-seven distinct books of his own, besides his great ecclesiastical history. Whether as a commentator on Scripture, or as a retailer of general information, Beda is little more than a compiler; his life of St. Cuthbert convicts him of gross credulity; of his history much might be said if our theme were Anglo-Latin literature. Though not an English author, Beda stands forth as a great English man of letters; more decisively, perhaps, the first scholar of his day than any one has been after him. He probably stood alone among his countrymen for his knowledge of Greek and Hebrew, and the extent of his acquaintance with the Latin classics. Writing, however, entirely in Latin, except for a translation of the Gospel of St. John left unfinished and unfortunately lost, he could effect nothing for the English language, and the first period of Anglo-Saxon literature closed without any noticeable progress towards the formation of a school of prose composition. One man who might perhaps have promoted it, if he had remained in England, was drawn away by the offers of Charlemagne to spread the light of education in France. By inviting (782) **Alcuin**, head of the great ecclesiastical school at York, to organise instruction in his own dominions. Charlemagne deprived



The Caedmon Cross  
at Whitby Abbey

England of a great scholar, but it is very doubtful whether the Latin teacher would ever have become the English author. Alcuin, as teacher and writer, did much for the instruction of the clergy both at home and abroad, and cannot have been wholly without influence on the laity; but the idea that Latin letters should be made accessible to the Saxon in his own language, and thus become the nucleus of a vernacular literature, was reserved for a greater than Alcuin—King Alfred.

## CHAPTER II

### FROM THE DANE TO THE NORMAN

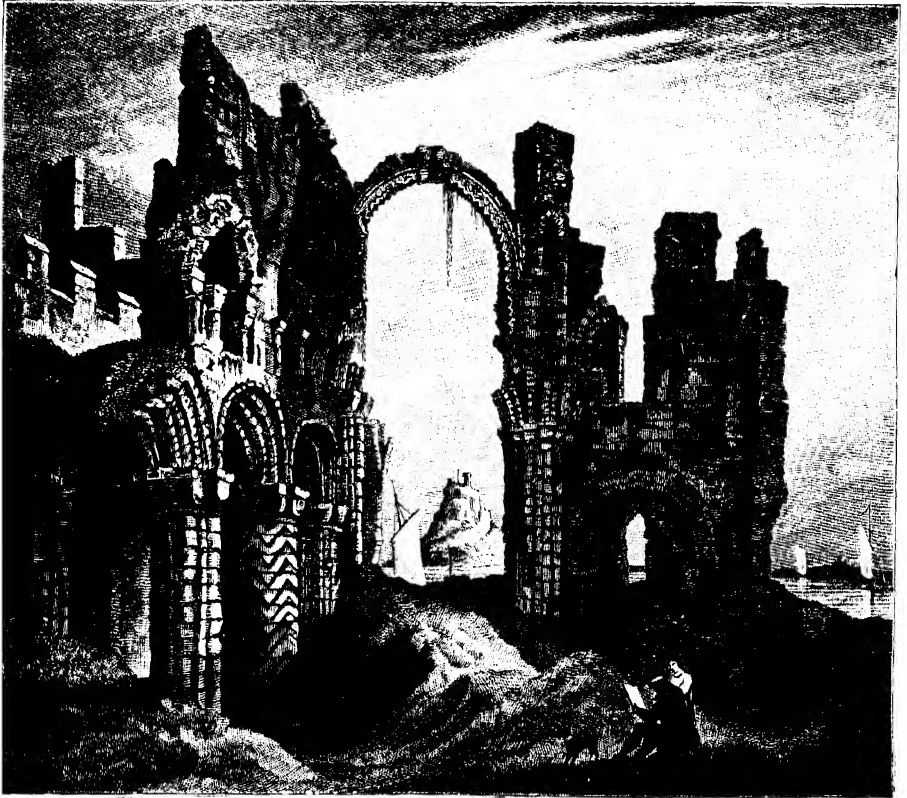
850-1066

EVERY nation, with but two exceptions—and these placed at opposite poles of the world of culture—has been indebted to its neighbours or its predecessors for the development and refinement of its literature. The literature even of India intimates acquaintance with Greek examples; and the only two from which similar indications are absent, or where at least they are unimportant, are the strongly contrasted literatures of Greece and China. The indigenous literature of China remained long exempt from all possibility of foreign influence, for the simple reason that no people known to the Chinese possessed any literary faculty, or, consequently, any power of modifying the intellectual productions of their neighbours: and when at length the Chinese came into contact with civilisations other than their own, prescription and self-esteem had hardened the naturally stolid genius of the nation into absolute impenetrability by extraneous influence. With the Greeks it was far otherwise, no people could be intellectually more flexible and sensitive, and yet, while borrowing freely in every other department, their literature remained entirely their own. Nothing can convey a higher idea of the unique gifts of this marvellous race. Were modern literatures restricted to their strictly national elements little indeed would remain of any of them. Hardly any nation could have stood in more need than the Anglo-Saxons of intellectual regeneration by the inoculation of imported culture. The Anglo-Saxon's distinguishing virtue was solidity, his distinguishing vice sluggishness. The type of his unimproved condition is that so admirably embodied by Sir Walter Scott in Athelstan the Unready, brave and sturdy, bulky in thew and sinew, a doughty champion if he can once be got into fighting trim, but so stolid and unimpressionable as to be made captive ere he has even thought of drawing his sword. We are uncomfortably reminded every day how nearly this description still answers to our national character, while the originality and occasional extravagance of our literature for the last four centuries attest how profoundly, in spite of persistent survivals, this character has been modified.

*Latin influence on Anglo-Saxon literature*

As we have seen, animosities of race and memories of conflict deprived the Anglo-Saxons of the vivifying influence which their Celtic neighbours

might otherwise have exerted upon their literature, and threw them back upon their Latin instructors and the pupils trained by these in the monasteries. Some of the monasteries, especially Lindisfarne and York, were genuine seats of learning. The importance of York in the eighth century may be gathered from the description of its pupil and professor Alcuin, and still more from the renown he had gained in it which induced Charlemagne to summon him to become one of the chief ministers of



Ruins of Lindisfarne Abbey

culture in France. The monastic course of instruction, while serviceable to learning, could do little to aid vernacular studies or develop any germs of literary genius which it might find existing, nor could it implant any of its own. Anglo-Saxon was as yet in too rude a condition to assimilate Latin models, and Latin was the only language in which the literary class, apart from the makers of minstrelsy, cared to express itself. The overwhelming majority of this class being clerical, its aims were chiefly didactic, and it probably occurred to few that the vernacular speech could be applied to any other purpose than that of instructing the ordinary man in his duty by means of homilies to be read to him, not by him. Although Mercia and Wessex had successively held the primacy among Anglo-Saxon states,

although the speech of Wessex was the most developed among Anglo-Saxon dialects, the native language and literature at the beginning of the ninth century still remain torpid for want of an impulse, and the force that then arrived to break up the stolidity of Anglo-Saxon existence threatened to sweep away civilisation and national life along with it.

The epic of *Beowulf* has already acquainted us with Scandinavian monarchs in the south of Sweden in the sixth century, whose spirit of enterprise carried their marauding expeditions as far as Friesland. From the early part of the sixth until near the end of the eighth century a pause takes place; we hear little of Scandinavian piracies, and the Anglo-Saxons are left to fight their battles among themselves, although Scandinavian auxiliaries would have been welcome to the weaker party, and would have been afforded great opportunities for conquest at the expense of both. In 787, however, a plundering Danish expedition landed in Dorsetshire; in 793 Lindisfarne Abbey, the Mecca of Northumbria, was burned; and by 830 the Scandinavian chieftains, probably impelled by the pressure of population, had organised their strength for systematic naval forays. They especially directed their attacks against Northumbria, the part of the island nearest their own habitations, and against the south-west, where the remnant of the ancient British population, still independent, or imperfectly subdued, was ready to side with them. The political events of the early part of the century should have augmented the Anglo-Saxon power of resistance; for Egbert, King of Wessex, had gradually pushed his conquests to the point of gaining recognition as "overlord" of the entire English part of the island. But his authority was rather nominal than real, there was little actual cohesion among his subjects, and the Danes, to employ the collective appellation commonly bestowed upon all Scandinavian invaders, though frequently defeated, were still more frequently victorious. And whereas the defeats they might sustain merely preluded their re-appearance in some other quarter, every victory was signalled by the destruction, if not of a town or city, at least of a group of churches or monasteries, the sole asylums of literature and culture in a rude age. The influence of a milder religion, unaccompanied as yet by any sentiment of chivalry, had enfeebled the national vigour, not so much from any real incompatibility between the precepts of religion and the duty of self-defence, as by the gradual and almost imperceptible transformation of a military into a monastic ideal of life. The Saxons fought bravely in particular instances, but never achieved the universal national uprising which could alone have delivered them from their enemy. The valour of the Danes, on the other hand, amounted to absolute contempt for death: and their strength and numbers may be estimated by the stupendous rampart of their raising which yet draws a semicircle around Flamborough Head. The Danish origin of this mighty work has been questioned, but without reason; the builders, whoever they were, could have had no other objects than those of protecting their booty and their vessels drawn up, as the

*Danish  
invasions*

fishermen's barks are drawn up at this day, on the pebbly landing-places, and of acquiring a position from which they could sally forth against the surrounding country. Its construction may be probably connected with the great expedition of 867, in which York was taken and sacked, the Northumbrian army routed, and both the rival kings of Northumbria, united by the common peril, were slain in the same battle.

*Ruin of  
literature  
and learning*

Hatred of Christianity may have contributed to direct the attacks of the Danes against monasteries, but they were also impelled by a more powerful motive, the place which, in a land destitute of fortified castles, monasteries filled as refuges of the helpless part of the population, and storehouses of their wealth. This double purpose was undoubtedly served by the round towers of Ireland, a country equally devastated by Danish incursions. These strongholds were evidently constructed with the view of allowing the enemy the fewest possible points of attack, the monasteries, not erected with prevision of a chronic state of warfare, having offered many. The Saxons do not seem to have often followed the example of the Irish in this respect, and their monasteries, though stoutly defended, everywhere became the prey of the invader. To appreciate the disastrous effect upon literature, it must be remembered that in those days the monastery was the college, and was not unfrequently, as at York, connected with a large teaching institution, intended for priests as well as monks, and available in some measure for inquisitive laymen. If the young Anglo-Saxon could not obtain knowledge there, he could obtain it nowhere, unless he emigrated; his parents' house had neither books nor teachers, and the tools of self-education were debarred. The youth who might have become a fair scholar for his time grew up devoid of knowledge, and when the time came when he should have taught others, he had nothing to impart. All literary culture might thus very conceivably die out in a generation. One faint link with the world of learning remained; the consolations of religion could not be foregone; and their efficacy was not thought to depend upon the intelligence either of teacher or hearer. The preacher, if able to read, might recite what he could not understand, if unable he might be taught to repeat it by rote to equal purpose. Priests, however, learned or unlearned, there must be. This explains the crass ignorance in which Alfred found his clergy—a condition not discreditable to them since they could not avert it; and even honourable, in so far as it attests their fortitude in remaining at their posts at a period of universal desolation.

It certainly seemed as though the ninth century in England were destined to repeat the history of the fifth. In the fifth century Britain had been inhabited by a civilised people, whose upper classes, at all events, were not unacquainted with literature. But the sinews of the nation were relaxed by soft living, the hardy warriors who had for centuries relieved them from the burden of military service were withdrawn to contend with barbarians nearer home; fierce enemies, until now held in check, pressed heavily



upon them ; and whether, deeming to cast out Satan by Satan, they really invoked the aid of another barbarous nation, or whether the latter were attracted by their weakness, they found themselves in presence not merely of conquerors but of exterminators. For a time the old civilisation seemed to have totally disappeared ; the inhabitants of the land spoke a new language, and the ideal of literature, could such be said to exist, was something entirely different from the old. As, however, foreign influences began to creep in, something analogous to the old state of things seemed about to return. A Latin civilisation appeared to be becoming superimposed upon a Teutonic, as formerly upon a Celtic substratum ; the blood and the language of the intruding race continued to differ from those of the race expelled, but the ideals of life and conduct were becoming the same, and those ideals threatened to do the new people the same service and disservice as they had done the old. That nothing might be wanting to the parallel, a people comparatively barbarous, at first mere marauders attracted by the hope of plunder, were finding out the goodness of the land and threatening to form permanent settlements and destroy or expel, not absorb, the Saxons, precisely as those had destroyed or expelled the Britons. The result must have been among other things the destruction of Anglo-Saxon speech and letters, and the provision of an entirely dissimilar groundwork for the literary culture which, under any circumstances, must have sooner or later established itself in Britain.

It is a curious consideration that English literature actually did receive a strong Scandinavian influence, but through a psychical, not a philological channel. The Northmen came again and actually prevailed. But in the interim a change had come over the invaders themselves. Settled in France for several generations, they had disused their original tongue, and the language they had adopted was saturated with the Latin influence which in the ninth century they would have extirpated. Instead of the adversaries of a higher culture they had become its promoters. Had the Northmen's conquest been effected in the days of Alfred, our language at this day would have resembled Danish, both by philological affinity and by the absence of any noticeable Latin element : and English literature must have been very different from what it is now. While, however, the Scandinavian element, at first repulsed, afterwards absorbed, failed to exert any special influence on British literature, the Scandinavian mind became a most important factor. The Northmen had not laid aside their nationality with their language, and the Conquest, notwithstanding its partial Latinisation of the English speech, invigorated instead of impairing the Teutonic elements of character which it found in possession. If we sought for the persons who have exercised the most decisive influence upon our literature, we might find them in two of our kings, William the Conqueror and Alfred, but for whose action at critical periods of our history Latin and its derivatives would have remained mere exotics, instead of vital constituents of our tongue. Neither had this aim consciously before him. William never

*Scandinavian  
influences*

knew that he was infusing a new element into English, and never dreamed of giving it a new lease of life; he would much sooner have obliterated it. If, as stated, he endeavoured to learn it, he was solely actuated by political considerations. If Alfred became the first Anglo-Saxon author of his day, his aim was not the preservation of the language, but the instruction of the people who spoke it. Alike, nevertheless, by his achievements in this comparatively limited department, and from the more important circumstance that the preservation of Anglo-Saxon as the basis of British speech is mainly due to him, he deserves the fullest notice at the hands of the literary historian.

*Life of  
Alfred the  
Great*

It is an interesting circumstance that our chief authority for the life of the great Anglo-Saxon monarch should be not a Saxon but a Celt. Asser, Bishop of Sherborne, was a monk of St. David's, and was invited by Alfred to his court along with other learned men. Of these, and of Asser himself,

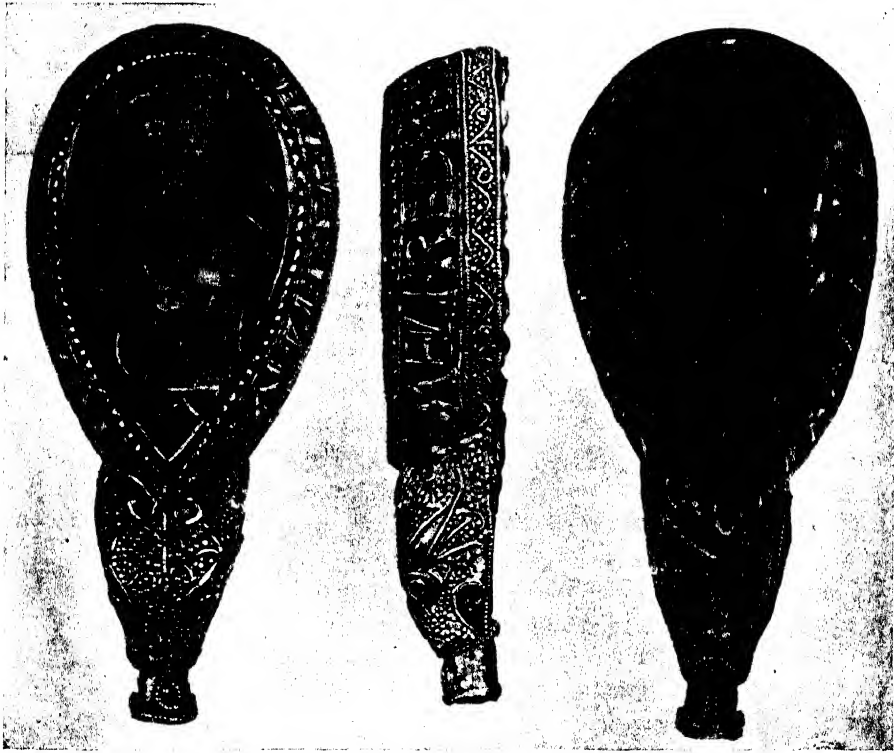


Coin of Alfred the Great

and his biography of his royal patron down to the year 887, we shall find other opportunities of speaking. For the present it is enough to say that, though interpolated with legendary matter, separable with no great difficulty from the genuine original, his record appears to be authentic. At the very beginning of the

story, however, we are confronted by a chronological difficulty. **Alfred**, the fifth and youngest son of Ethelwulf, King of Wessex, is said by Asser to have been born in 849. His eldest brother, Ethelstan, however, was of an age to be invested with the government of the sub-kingdom of Kent upon the succession of his father to the kingdom of Wessex in 839; and the third son, Ethelbald, fought the Danes along with his father in the great battle of Ockley in 851, when Alfred would have been only two years old. It seems unlikely that there could have been such an interval between the birth of Alfred and those of his brothers, and the difficulty is increased when we read that Alfred was sent to Rome in 853. It is scarcely probable that so young a child would have been exposed to the risks of what was then a toilsome and dangerous journey. If we may put Alfred's birth eight or nine years back the chronological difficulties will be removed, and it will become easy to understand how the youthful promise which Alfred must have given may have inspired his father with the idea of sending him for a time to reside at the capital of Western Christendom. The step becomes more intelligible when viewed in connection with the character of Ethelwulf, the dominant note of which was a deep feeling of religion. Ethelwulf seems, indeed, to have impersonated those superstitious and quietist tendencies of the Anglo-Saxon character which so greatly impaired the national strength in conflict with the fierce Northmen, but which on the other hand indicated a refinement of nature upon which the moral and intellectual promise of his youngest son would

not be lost. History, however, and no doubt with good reason, ascribes a still stronger influence upon Alfred's development to his mother Osburga. The anecdotes of his youth handed down may belong to the domain of legend, but if so this is the legend which has its basis in truth, and only comes into being to recompense posterity for the loss of truth through the injury of time. It may be added that Asser's story of Osburga having shown her son a manuscript with a beautifully illuminated initial letter, and promised it to him on condition of his learning to read it, if authentic, we



Jewel of Alfred the Great

might almost say, if generally believed, proves that Alfred's birth must have occurred some years before 849. Historians have perceived that it could not have taken place in Alfred's infancy, between his birth in 849 and his visit to Rome in 853, and as upon his return to England his father had another wife, they have supposed that Osburga was repudiated by her husband, and that the incident occurred while she lived in retirement after her dethronement. Such a transaction would not have been devoid of precedent; Charlemagne himself had divorced his first wife, Desiderata, but she had lived with him only a year, and he had no children by her; and the proceeding appears inconsistent with the religious character of King Ethelwulf, and with the Pope's special patronage of him and his legitimate son, and the scandal and contention it must have excited would not have

escaped the notice of history. The new queen, moreover, was the daughter of Charles the Bald, King of the Franks, who would hardly have allowed her to occupy so invidious a position as the consort of a sovereign whose legitimate wife was still alive. Some clue may be afforded to the problem of Alfred's birth-year by the curious fact that in Camden's edition of Asser 855 is stated to be his eleventh year, which is inconsistent with all the rest of the chronology. It looks very much as though a variant chronology existed in some MS., and this conjecture is favoured by the circumstance that Asser, whose history of Alfred ends in 887, speaks of him as in his forty-fifth year, which would precisely agree with his birth in 843.

*Alfred's  
education*

The date of Alfred's birth is no idle question, for his age at the period of his visit to Rome has an important bearing on his after history. It continued from 853 to 856. The influence of the Eternal City, and all else that a prolonged visit to the continent implied, must have been slight upon a child between four and seven years of age, compared with that which it might exert upon a boy between ten and thirteen. In the former case Alfred could only bring back impressions of childish wonder and curiosity, in the latter his stay would have been fertile in knowledge and instruction absorbed by one of the most receptive of human minds, and in external impressions registered and elaborated by one of the most intelligent. Rome indeed no less than other cities of Western Europe lay immersed in barbarism; yet in comparison with Alfred's own country its intellectual condition must have been as light to darkness. If the abstract love of humane studies was insufficient to keep these alive, ecclesiastical and political interests compelled their maintenance at as high a standard as the circumstances of the age allowed. There must have been much better schools than then possible in England, distracted by Danish invasions; and a boy between ten and thirteen would be just at the age when their teaching would be most helpful. The indirect influences, nevertheless, would be more potent and valuable than any direct instruction. We can but feebly imagine the transition from the incivility of the West Saxon capital to the spiritual metropolis of Latin Christendom, with the actuality of a spiritual empire and the memories and traditions of a secular, its monuments of the past, more numerous and imposing than now, the undimmed gorgeousness of its recent works in mosaic and incrustated metal, the art-ideal of their time, its embassies and its pilgrims, the constant coming and going of men from all lands bound upon all errands, Greeks, Jews, Syrians, perhaps even Saracens, tribes and nations regarded in Anglo-Saxondom as strange creatures, whose existence was easier to admit than to realise. The character of the Pope and the circumstances of his day would also be powerful educational influences, supposing Alfred old enough to profit by them. Leo the Fourth was one of the greatest of the Popes. An Italian of Northern extraction, as it would seem, he had been elected as the fittest person to defend

Rome against the Saracens, who had pillaged churches within its precincts under his predecessor. He had successfully repulsed their attacks, and at the time of Alfred's visit was constructing the fortified bulwark which, as the Leonine city, preserves his name to this day. This state of things must have been deeply impressive to Alfred, fresh from a land also scourged by the attacks of heathens, and barbarians beside, which the Saracens were not. Here he might in a manner foresee and rehearse the part reserved for himself. Nor can anything be more likely than that Leo took a deep interest in the hopeful young prince, son of one of the most religious kings of his day. Ethelwulf's own pilgrimage to Rome, indeed, has been, though hardly upon sufficient authority, said to have produced the national tribute of "Peter's pence," afterwards rightly deemed a disgrace, but in which no one at the time saw anything humiliating. The germ had been deposited by Offa's promise of thirty pence a day towards the relief of the poor and the lighting of St. Peter's.

Alfred's visit to Rome was connected with a singular event. The Pope "took him to his bishopson, and hallowed him to king." Mr. Freeman is no doubt right in considering that a circumstance so clearly asserted by Alfred's biographer should not be rejected merely from the difficulty of understanding it. The difficulty is unquestionably very great. Perhaps some light may be thrown upon it by the comparison with the action of the Emperor Constantine Pogonatus in the seventh century in sending locks of the hair of his sons Justinian and Heraclius to Rome, thereby making them the adopted children of St. Peter and his successors. No question of the succession could arise in this instance, as both the sons were thus consecrated; and if it was now intended to give Alfred any right to the crown superior to his brothers the ceremony remained a dead letter. He was named by his father's will in the regular order of succession, and he did not come to the throne until after the deaths of all his brothers, although under the last, Ethelred, he seems to have borne the title of king. The incident of his "hallowing," whatever interpretation may be put upon it, confirms the view that Alfred's visit to Rome was paid in boyhood and not in infancy. It would be more appropriate in the case of a young prince who was manifesting abundant promise than of a child whose capabilities must be uncertain.

In 855 Alfred's father, Ethelwulf, appeared in Rome. He had



*Alfred's  
visit to Rome*

**Pope Leo IV.**

*From Platina's "Lives of the Popes"*

*Life of  
Alfred until  
his accession*

travelled through the dominions of Charles the Bald, King of the West Franks, who received him with great honour. On his arrival in Rome Leo the Fourth was either dead or dying, and Ethelwulf was a witness of the tumultuous proceedings which attended the election of his successor, Benedict the Third. These did not impair his devotion to the Holy See; his piety required a year's stay in Rome, at the end of which he departed homeward, taking his son with him. The incidents of his journey must have had a strong influence upon the intellectual development of the young prince if of sufficient age. It may be reasonably conjectured that at his stay at Charles the Bald's court in the preceding year Ethelwulf had become enamoured of Charles's daughter Judith, then scarcely of marriageable age. At all events he was betrothed to her on his return in July 856, and the marriage took place in France in October. The Anglo-Saxon king and his son must have spent the intervening period at the Frankish king's court, where Alfred would meet the chief literary characters of the age—Rabanus Maurus, Servatus Lupus, above all Scotus Erigena. The example of a royal court where learning was highly honoured must have been most suggestive and stimulating to him, and Englishmen are probably under much obligation to the involuntary causes of his residence, King Ethelwulf and Queen Judith. They did not think so at the time. The foreign marriage was most unpopular. The sons Ethelwulf had left behind him refused to accept their girl-stepmother, and resisted his endeavours to reseat himself on the throne of Wessex. Ethelwulf retired with his young wife to the sub-kingdom of Kent, where he died in 858, and Ethelbald, his successor in the kingdom of Wessex, healed the family breach in the most effectual manner by marrying Judith himself. Of Alfred's attitude in these transactions we have no knowledge, on any hypothesis respecting his age he was too young to take a prominent part in them. The special affection shown him by his father justifies the supposition that he abode with him until his death, and he would participate in the ensuing family reconciliation. He certainly made no attempt to avail himself of any claim to the throne which the papal consecration might be supposed to have given him, and appears to have lived in retirement until, in 866, the death of his brothers Ethelbald and Ethelbert without issue left him heir-presumptive to their successor Ethelred. From this time he appears prominent in peace and war, and during the five years of his brother's reign is described as his "secundarius" or lieutenant.

*Alfred's  
victories over  
the Danes*

It is foreign to our purpose to detail the numerous battles by which, as Professor Freeman sums up the matter, "When the Scandinavian invasions threatened the utter overthrow of England, and especially of English Christianity, Alfred saved his own kingdom from the general wreck, and made it the centre for the deliverance and union of the whole country." The point for the historian of literature is that in so doing Alfred, aside from his own writings and his works as an educator of his

people, enacted a great literary part. But for him Anglo-Saxon letters would have perished; and although England would not have been illiterate, its literature would not have been English. From 866, the year when Alfred first appears conspicuously in public life, the Danish plan of operation alters. The Danes are no longer mere freebooters; they settle down and establish regularly organised kingdoms, and but for their ultimate defeat would have Scandinavianised the whole country. They must have eventually embraced Christianity, but before things had come to that point the Anglo-Saxon speech would in all probability have been absorbed or expelled. Alfred rescued our language as well as our independence and nationality. There is no contemporary partner or rival in his glory, and no ground for thinking that England could have been preserved if Alfred had not existed,—a scathing rebuke to the historical theories which disparage individual action in comparison with assumed general laws.

Alfred's more direct services to the literature of his country fall under two heads, his authorship and his endeavours to promote lettered

comitens. qui pauperem facit  
 & dicit humiliat. & fulleuat.  
 aliq̃ diebus pauper & igno-  
 tal ibidem diluit. Factum  
 est autem in una sabbi. ut sub  
 bulens more solito. gregem so-  
 lita duxisset ad pascua. Solo re-  
 ge cum eidem igne domi rema-  
 nente. Porro mulier ut depol-  
 cebat necessitat igne subposito  
 panem adcoquendum sartagin  
 comisterat. quos non nulli lon-  
 das appellat. quibz martus  
 ei rediens & ipa ueliceretur.  
 Cuius more plebeio simili  
 ex necessitate. Patis aliquādu  
 eet occupata negotiis. tandē  
 ad ignem sollicita recurrrens &  
 panem ex altera parte combustū  
 repiens. primus regem talibz  
 aggressa & contumelios. Quid  
 h homo sedens meditari. & pa-  
 nes curare dedignaris. Quid ge-  
 tuum qui moris. que ignavia.  
 que tibi de futuris fiducia. Quid  
 te nobilitatis te ex p̃sentis. pa-  
 nes quos negligis appaunt. ap-  
 paratos non differas māducare.

Dispositio  
 hinc oritur  
 in nomine  
 nep̃ hinc

Twelfth Century MS. Life of St. Neot. Here first occurs  
 the story of Alfred and the Cakes

*Description.*—A late twelfth-century copy of a work composed shortly after the Norman Conquest, purporting to narrate the life of St. Neot, the Cornish anchorite. It is in this romance that the story of Alfred and the cakes first makes its appearance, and hence it was adopted into the interpolated version of Asser's *Life of Alfred*.

*Translation.*—"Now it happened one day that the swineherd (with whom Alfred had taken refuge) had driven out his herds as usual to their pasture, and the king was left alone with his wife in the house. Thereupon the woman, in the course of her household duties, had lit a fire, and placed the cakes for her own and her husband's dinner in a cooking-pan upon it to bake. Being then, as is apt to happen with poor folks, occupied for some time with other business, presently she ran back anxiously to the fire, and found the cakes burnt on one side. Whereupon she forthwith assailed the king with reproaches: 'What are you sitting thinking here for, fellow, and can't take the trouble to turn the cakes? What's your country? Where did you learn manners? What idleness! What do you expect to become of you? You call yourself a noble? You won't help to cook the cakes, but you are not slow to eat them when they are cooked.' The king, thus vehemently scolded, did not make any impatient answer, but, fortified with gentleness and patience, like a second Job, 'in all this sinned not with his lips, nor charged God foolishly.'"

culture. The former was the chief instrument of the latter, and the two are so combined as hardly to admit of separation.

*Alfred as a  
man of letters*

The sovereigns who have deserved the highest praise as protectors of letters have not always been themselves distinguished as authors. Except the Mogul Emperor Akhbar, to whom, with Marcus Aurelius, among all rulers, he seems to offer the strongest resemblance, Alfred stands highest in both departments together, though far from attaining the first rank in either taken by itself. Inferior to the first Roman Emperor as an author, to the second as a patron, he yet achieved more in authorship than Augustus, and was a more useful patron of letters than Cæsar. His eminence here is not so much due to any extraordinary force of genius as to the circumstances of his time and country. We have seen that the Anglo-Saxons possessed a poetical literature by no means to be slighted; but we have encountered hardly any examples of a literature in prose, except a few homilies. Such a literature remained to be created. The first man who should attempt it with adequate faculty could hardly fail of making a deep mark, provided that his writings were such as were required by the age. Here Alfred is truly great in his modesty. He does not, as without any imputation of vanity he might have done, seek to celebrate his own exploits, or to gain reputation for wit and wisdom of his own. He simply considers what books are most likely to benefit his own people, and, his choice once made, sits down to the humble employment of a translator. In so doing he is quite unconsciously discharging a more important function than he deems, he is laying the foundation of English prose. He is, moreover, shifting his country's literary centre of gravity. Hitherto Anglo-Saxon literature has been poetical and Northumbrian; henceforth Wessex is to provide the dominant dialect, and the literature is mainly to run into prose. The literature of Northumbria is almost a blank for several centuries.

*Alfred's  
translations*

If it is a proof of Alfred's good sense that he rather chose to translate the works of others likely to be of substantial use to his countrymen than to strive for literary renown as an original author, this good sense is no less evinced in his selection of the books to be rendered into the vernacular. Those undoubtedly rendered by him or under his direction meet, in every instance, the needs of his age at some important point. They are:—

The *History of Orosius*, not merely an historical narrative, but as satisfactory an approach to a philosophy of history as the limited outlook and theological prejudice of the age of its composition allowed.

The *Pastoral Care* of Pope Gregory the Great, as good a manual for a clergy depressed into ignorance and barbarism by the misfortunes of the times as could well be compiled for an age in which the sacerdotal conception of the pastoral office was as yet the only one possible.

Gregory's *Dialogues*. A book of moral and religious tales, intended to be edifying, and all the more effective in the middle ages from its liberal infusion of the grotesque.



<sup>leap dñi 7 pteletur</sup> <sup>god min 7 pteletur</sup> <sup>god min 7 pteletur</sup>  
**U** <sup>ius dñi</sup> <sup>& benedictus dñs ms.</sup> <sup>exaltetur dñs</sup>

<sup>salutis mee;</sup>

**D** <sup>quidam vindictas michi.</sup> <sup>& subdis populos sub me.</sup>

<sup>liberator ms de gentibus me iracundis</sup>

**E** <sup>tabimur surgentibus in me exaltabis me.</sup> <sup>auris iniquo</sup>  
<sup>cripiet me;</sup> <sup>2</sup> <sup>mini tuo psalmum dicam;</sup>

**P** <sup>propterea confitebor tibi in nationibus dñe.</sup> <sup>& no</sup>

**M** <sup>agnificans salutem regis eius.</sup> <sup>& faciens misericordiam</sup>  
<sup>apo suo dauid.</sup> <sup>& semini eius usque in seculum;</sup>

## XVIII. IN FINEM SALMVS DAVID.

**E** <sup>li euangelium gloriam dei.</sup> <sup>et opera manu</sup>  
<sup>eius adiungit firmamentum</sup>

**O** <sup>ies diei eructat uerbum.</sup> <sup>& nox nocti indicat scientiam.</sup>

**N** <sup>on sunt loquela neque sermones.</sup> <sup>quorum non</sup>  
<sup>audiantur uoces eorum;</sup> <sup>2</sup> <sup>terre uerba eorum;</sup>

**I** <sup>nomine terra exiit sonus eorum.</sup> <sup>& in fines forbis</sup>

**I** <sup>n sole posuit tabernaculum suum.</sup> <sup>& ipse tanquam</sup>  
<sup>sponsus procedens de thalamo suo</sup>

**E** <sup>xultauit ut gigas ad currendam uiam.</sup> <sup>ad summo</sup>  
<sup>caelo egressio eius.</sup> <sup>2</sup> <sup>abscondat a calore ei;</sup>

**E** <sup>to cursum ei usque ad summum eius.</sup> <sup>nec est qui se</sup>

**L** <sup>ex dñi immaculata conuersens animas.</sup> <sup>testi</sup>  
<sup>monui di fidele.</sup> <sup>sapientia prestant parvulis;</sup>



The *Consolation of Boethius*. There can be no surer touchstone of a refined and sensitive mind than its appreciation of this book. Alfred's admiration for it, the predilection with which he evidently regarded it, and his numerous variations and embellishments, sever him at once from the multitude of contemporary kings, and place him on a level with the other two monarchs who have most intimately united the philosophic character with efficiency in rule and administration, Marcus Aurelius and Akhbar. Any of the three, it is probable, if transferred to the place of the others, would have signalised himself in nearly the same manner. It should not be forgotten that of all the numerous mediæval translations of the *Consolation*, one of which is by Chaucer, Alfred's is the greatest.

*The Venerable Beda's Ecclesiastical History*. We have already described this book; so English in subject and sentiment that in rendering it, or causing it to be rendered, Alfred but restored it to the language to which it should always have belonged.

Of these books three, the *Orosius*, the *Cura Pastoralis*, and the *Boethius*, were undoubtedly translated by Alfred himself. The versions of the *Dialogues* and of Beda were probably made by others under his superintendence. That of the *Dialogues*, by Werferth, Bishop of Worcester, has not yet been printed. The translation of Beda, which does not claim to be Alfred's, is attributed to him by Aelfric, and the traces of the Mercian dialect which it has been thought to exhibit are not absolutely incompatible with this belief, as they may have been introduced by a copyist. Any version, however, executed under Alfred's direction was very likely to be ascribed to him.

Some other books have been attributed to Alfred. *King Alfred's Book of Martyrs* appears to be a work of the ninth century from not containing any narratives of more recent date, but its connection with Alfred seems merely conjectural. The *Blooms*, a translation or adaptation of Augustine's *Soliloquies* and his *Epistle to Paulina on the Vision of God*, with interpolations from other sources, is distinctly attributed to Alfred in the MS. The diction, nevertheless, is of much later date, but this may be due to the transcriber; and the connection between it and the version of Boethius, pointed out by Wülker, certainly is remarkable. Wülker is also inclined, on the strength of resemblances between Alfred's style and that of a version of fifty of the Psalms preserved in a manuscript at Paris, to accept William of Malmesbury's statement that Alfred translated the Psalms, and to recognise them as his work. If so, this were probably his last literary labour, interrupted by death.

*Works erroneously or doubtfully ascribed to Alfred*

Alfred, unlike some other erudite sovereigns, was far from allowing the charms of study to encroach upon the duties of monarchy. His literary activity falls into two periods, the first long delayed and afterwards interrupted by the duty of warring with the Dane. Having come to the throne in 871, he was engaged in continual warfare until 878. It was then, probably, that he issued perhaps the most important of all his works, but

not coming under the head of literature—his digest of laws, founded upon those of his predecessors, especially Ina, but thoroughly revised and adapted to the times, and confirmed by the assent of his official counsellors. In 884 war again broke out. In 886 Alfred was busy fortifying London, but about this time he seems to have invited to court Asser, the Welsh monk of St. David's, his future biographer. Sickness prevented Asser's arrival until the following year, when Alfred devoted himself to studying Latin with him for eight months. Whatever acquaintance with the language he had gained at Rome must probably have become faint, but he must have thoroughly regained it, for his versions from the Latin are evidently the work of a single hand, and not patched or verified by a corrector. In his own simple words, prefixed to the translation of Pope Gregory's *Pastoral Care*:—

"When I reflected how the teaching of the Latin language had recently decayed through this people of the Angles, and yet many could read English writing, then I began among other various and manifold businesses of this kingdom to turn into English the book that is called *Pastoralis* in Latin, and *Hierde Bôc* in English, sometimes word for word, sometimes sense for sense, just as I learned it of Plegmund my archbishop, and of Asser my bishop, and of Grimbald my priest, and of John my priest. After I had learned it so that I understood it and could render it with fullest meaning, I translated it into English."

Alfred, then, did not sit down to make a translation relying upon his general knowledge of Latin, but, with competent assistance, went carefully and minutely through the very book that was to be rendered, and made sure that he thoroughly understood it before he began to translate it. This was not with the intention of being literal, for his version is frequently paraphrastic, and he interpolates additions both of his own and from other sources. He made it no point of conscience to reproduce his original with accuracy: the point of view from which a translation appears a work of art was entirely foreign to him, he aimed merely at an adaptation with a strictly utilitarian object. Latin was then the key of knowledge, which he desired to place in the hands of his countrymen.

"Therefore to me it seemeth better, if it seemeth so to you, that we also some books, those that most needful are for all men to be acquainted with, that we turn those into the speech which we all can understand, and that ye do as we very easily may with God's help, if we have the requisite peace, that all the youth which now is in England of free men, of those who have the means to be able to go in for it, be set to learning while they are fit for no other business, until such time as they can thoroughly read English writing: afterwards further instruction may be given in the Latin language to such as are intended for a more advanced education, and are to be prepared for higher office."

The mention in the same preface of Plegmund as archbishop shows

that it was not written before 890. The most probable order of the works translated by Alfred or by his instructions seems on the whole to be: (1) Gregory's *Pastoral*; (2) Bede; (3) Orosius—all between 890 and 893; (4) Boethius; (5) Gregory's *Dialogues*; (6) The Psalms, if his. The *Book of Martyrs*, if he were connected with it, would be one of the latest. The *Blooms* may perhaps be doubtfully identified with a kind of commonplace-book mentioned by Asser, in which case its compilation may have lasted throughout the whole of Alfred's literary period.

Of these works the Boethius is the most interesting, both from the special merit of the original and the peculiarity of Alfred's own handling of it. The subject of the treatise, it may be necessary to inform some readers, is the consolation supposed to be administered by Philosophy to the author, the noble and accomplished Boethius, the last of the Romans, minister of Theodoric, King of Italy, as, about 525 A.D., he lies captive awaiting sentence of death from his jealous and misguided master, a near parallel to the case of Henry VIII. and Sir Thomas More. "In view," says Mr. Stewart, the chief modern English writer on Boethius, "of Alfred's literary motive and personal tastes, the reader of his translations must not look for any strict adherence to the original. He expands and curtails as the spirit moves him. It is on his translation of Boethius that his personality is most strongly impressed. That he had from the first no intention of adhering strictly to the text before him, either in thought or form, is shown by his changing the original arrangement of five books of alternate verse and prose into forty-two chapters, and by his substituting for the two persons of the dialogue Wisdom and Reason in place of Philosophy; and now the Mind, now Boethius, now the personal pronoun in place of the Philosopher. His method of dealing with the difficulty and obscurity of the Latin is summary. He finds out the gist of the philosopher's meaning, and proceeds to adapt and weld it to his liking, as he thinks will be the most profitable to the readers of his time, adding here a homely illustration, there an explanatory note, now expanding the frequent sentences into a long paraphrase, and now cutting the knot of a long passage by the simple expedient of omission, and interpreting the whole by the light of Christian doctrine." There is, it need not be said, nothing doctrinal in the original; the arguments to prove Boethius a Christian, which are not devoid of weight, are not derived from the *Consolation*. Had the work, however, existed solely in Alfred's translation there would have been no controversy on the subject. Boethius's philosophical theism is Hebraised by a strong infusion of Scriptural references. "In Alfred's eyes, the city of Truth from which Boethius is exiled becomes the Heavenly Jerusalem; the haven of quiet whither the wise man turns for shelter from the storms of life is Christ. The mention of the fiery lava-flood of Aetna suggests the deluge; the universal rule of obedience to the Creator reminds him of one signal exception, the outbreak of the rebellious angels; the Titans piling Pelion on Ossa to reach to heaven find a parallel in Nimrod's vain attempt to scale the sky with

Alfred's  
Boethius

the tower of Babel." The extensive interpolations which frequently occur are usually in the same sense. As it is only by these that Alfred's style as an original author can be appreciated, we give one from Dr. Sedgefield's version :—

"All creatures Thou hast made alike, and in some things also not alike.



Extract from Anglo-Saxon Chronicle in English and Latin of the Eleventh Century  
showing brief mention of Alfred's death :

*British Museum, Cott. MS. Dom. A 8*

"DCCCCI in this year died King Alfred on the 26th of October; and he held the kingdom twenty-eight years and a half;  
and then Eadward his son took the kingdom"

Though Thou hast given one name to all creatures, naming them the World when taken together, yet Thou hast parted the single name among four creatures : one is Earth, the second Water, the third Air, the fourth Fire. To each of them Thou hast appointed its own separate place ; each is kept distinct from the other, and yet held in bonds of peace by Thine ordinance, so that none of them should overstep the other's bounds, but cold brooketh heat, and wet suffereth dry. Earth and water have a cold nature ; earth is dry

and cold ; water wet and cold. Air is defined as both cold and wet and also warm. This is not to be wondered at, for air is created half-way between the dry cold earth and the hot fire. Fire is uppermost above all these worldly creatures. Wonderful is Thy contriving to have done both things : namely, to have bounded things one over against the other, and likewise to have mingled the dry cold earth beneath the cold wet water, so that the yielding and flowing water hath a home in the solid earth, being unable to stand alone. The earth holdeth the water and in some degree sucketh it in, and is maintained by what it sucketh, so that it groweth and beareth blossoms and likewise fruits ; for, if the water did not moisten it, it would dry up and be scattered by the wind like dust or ashes. No living thing could enjoy the land or the water, nor dwell in either for the cold, if Thou hadst not in some measure mingled them with fire. With marvellous skill Thou hast so ordered that fire doth not burn up water and earth, when mingled with either ; nor again do water and earth wholly quench fire."

The Anglo-Saxon prose of the day was thus very straightforward and simple, neglectful of ornament, and little capable of expressing abstruse thought. The impressiveness which it possesses arises mainly from the character of the writer. If he be a man like Alfred, the force of the personality will irradiate the artlessness of the phraseology. It must be remembered that this was almost the first prose that had been written in English, and that a distinction between lettered and colloquial speech was hardly recognised. Prose is always younger than her sister Poetry, and her beginnings are more timid and awkward. Whether Alfred can claim the title of poet is doubtful. The numerous poetical compositions interspersed through the *Consolation* are in his version rendered into prose ; but the work is accompanied by a metrical translation of them, or rather a metrical elaboration of the old version, distinctly attributed to him by the writer of an anonymous preface. "These cares are very hard for us to reckon that in his days came upon the kingdoms to which he had succeeded, and yet when he had studied this book and turned it from Latin into English prose, he wrought it up once more into verse, as it is now done." The editor, therefore, wrote at some subsequent period of tranquillity : if under Athelstan or even Edgar his testimony deserves respect, even though apparently contrary to a short prelude in verse prefixed to the metrical renderings, hardly so if under Edward the Confessor. Without doubt, however, the version is of the age of Alfred, and extracts may serve well as specimens of the Anglo-Saxon poetry of his time :—

O Thou Creator of bright constellations  
Of heaven and earth ; Thou on the high-seat  
Eternal reignest and the round heaven  
All swiftly movest, and through Thy holy might  
The lights of heaven makest to hear Thee,  
E'en as the sun scattereth darkness  
Of the swart night time through Thy strong power,

And with her pale beams the bright stars  
 The moon doth humble through Thy might's moving :  
 At whiles too she robbeth the radiant sun  
 Of his full light, when it befalleth  
 That they come together by close compulsion.  
 So too the glorious star of morning  
 That we by its other name star of evening  
 Oft hear called, Thou constrainest  
 To follow the way where the sun wendeth ;  
 Every year he must ever travel,  
 Fare before him. O Father, Thou sendest  
 Long days in summer, with heat sultry ;  
 To the winter also wondrous short days  
 Hast Thou granted. To the trees Thou givest  
 South-west breezes when the black tempest  
 Sprung from the north-east had utterly stript them  
 Of every leaf with its loathly wind.

Behold all creatures in the earth's compass  
 Obey Thy hests ; the same do they in heaven  
 With mind and main, save man only ;  
 He oftenest worketh in despite of Thy will.  
 Ah ! Thou Eternal and Thou Almighty,  
 Author and Ruler of all creation,  
 Pity the offspring of Thy poor world !

O sons of mankind, o'er earth moving,  
 Let each that hath freedom find out the way  
 To the eternal goodness whereof our speech is,  
 And to the blessings that are our song's burden.  
 The man that is straitly bound by the sway  
 Of the worthless love of this world glorious,  
 Let him right soon seek for himself  
 Fulness of freedom, that forthwith he may come  
 Into the blessings of the Bidder of spirits ;  
 For this is the rest from all our wrestling,  
 The hopeful haven for the high vessels  
 Of the minds of us men, mild harbour bright.  
 This is the only hithe we ever shall have  
 After the tossing of troublous billows,  
 After each tempest, truly peaceful  
 This is the sanctuary, the sole comfort  
 Of all weary mortals, when they are over,  
 Our worldly troubles ; 'tis the winsome bourne  
 That shall be ours to own after these hardships.

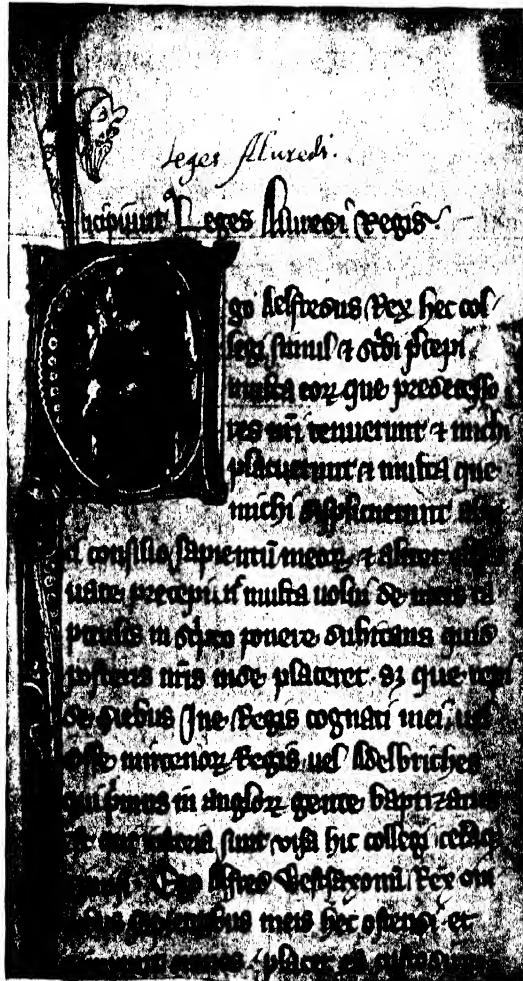
*Alfred's  
 history and  
 geography*

Alfred's choice of the Spaniard Orosius's epitome of general history (compiled A.D. 416) might also be considered as a proof of discrimination if the fact had not been that he had hardly any choice in the matter. Orosius, according to his patron St. Augustine, "a young presbyter, zealous, alert in intellect, ready of speech, and fitted to be useful in the work of the Lord," was the only writer extant in Alfred's day likely to find general acceptance as the author of a manual of general history, inasmuch as he was the only Christian historian. It might almost be added that he was the only philosophical historian, for—slender as his abilities might



appear in comparison with the great authors of the past, he had lived at the period when history first became ripe for philosophical treatment, and was in fact the mouthpiece of no less remarkable a genius than St. Augustine. Augustine's narrow theory of history was, with all its defects, the first theory of history that had ever been broached; nor indeed was any theory possible until material for thought should have been provided by greater mutations in the world's affairs than had been beheld by Thucydides or Tacitus. The speculations of St. Augustine thus indicated a distinct advance in the evolution of the human mind, and by their recognition of a divine plan and purpose in history became invested with a moral value which in Alfred's eyes no doubt transcended their utility as a mere record of events. Even from this latter point of view Orosius's jejune abstract probably gave Alfred's countrymen as much information as they were able to turn to account. Orosius was a geographer as well as an historian, and the geographical portion of his treatise inspired Alfred with the happy idea of himself drawing up a geographical account of the Northern lands unknown to his author. This little treatise, excellent in every way, entitles Alfred to the fame of the first English geographer. It is accompanied by accounts of voyages related to him by visitors to his court—Ohtere the Norwegian, who had doubled the North Cape and explored the White Sea; and Wulfstan, a Dane, who had visited Esthonia. These documents, most interesting in themselves, sufficiently attest Alfred's insatiable curiosity and zeal for the publication as well as the acquisition of knowledge.

The most remarkable feature of Alfred's translation of Gregory's



Beginning of the Laws of Alfred

From a MS. in the British Museum

*Pastoral Care* is the well-known preface in which he laments the decay of learning owing to the Danish invasions, and makes the remarkable statement that when he came to the throne not a single priest to the south of the Thames was acquainted with Latin. "In former days," he says, "people from abroad came to this land for wisdom and instruction, and now we should have to get them abroad if we were going to have them." The existence of any scholarly class apart from the clergy being in Alfred's day impossible, the elevation of the general standard of culture must necessarily begin by the elevation of the clergy, and probably no better first step could have been taken than the translation and dissemination of the treatise of the greatest of the Popes. After a while the paths of Gregory and Alfred would diverge. Gregory wished to make the clergy supreme in the State: Alfred would make them instruments for the general good. For a while they could travel on together; but could Alfred have lived to the time of Dunstan he must have appeared in a new character, and the voice of the ecclesiastics who then monopolised history would not have been so uniformly favourable to him. It was his marvellous good fortune to live exempt from controversies, to have no enemies except the enemies of his people; no rivals to dispute his throne; no ministers to challenge a share of his glory; no foreign interference; no inward temptation; no hostile critics; no jealous detractor; to be one not too far in advance of his times nor in any respect behind them; a unique example of a man whom none could wish in any respect other than what he was.

Before parting with Alfred, it should be pointed out that the life of him by his teacher, Bishop Asser, has been so largely interpolated that Mr. Thomas Wright and Sir Henry Howorth have doubted its authenticity. Such romantic legends as the burning of the cakes, and such unhistorical statements as the foundation of the university of Oxford by Alfred exist, however, only in late MSS., and were not found in a nearly contemporary manuscript of the tenth century, which unfortunately perished in the fire which consumed so much of the Cottonian Library in 1732, but not until it had been edited by Francis Wise (Oxford, 1722). These interpolations are not noticed by Florence of Worcester, who wrote at the beginning of the twelfth century, and continually copies Asser without naming him. Professor Freeman, moreover, has pointed out little touches of internal evidence almost proving that the author must have been a Celt.

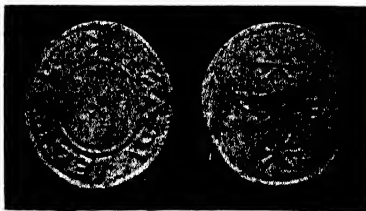
Nothing is more noteworthy in the history of English literature and education in Alfred's time than the degree in which all intellectual impulse is imparted by the King, at once the mechanist and the mainspring of the entire machinery. He is his people's sole teacher and their sole legislator. Asser, Plegmund, and the other eminent men around him would apparently have remained undistinguished without him; great as the desert must have been the merit which brought Asser out of a Welsh monastery and Plegmund out of a hermitage. Alfred's history repeats

that of Charlemagne, who "brought learning to France by drawing to it from Anglia and Italy the best plants for his new fields;" if on a miniature scale the reason is not that Alfred is a miniature of Charles the Great, but that Anglo-Saxon England is a miniature of the Continent. In both cases we see what we shall not see again for a long time—the secular power coming to the front in intellectual things, and making the spiritual power its instrument and satellite. According to the ideas of the age the process should have been reversed: the transposition was, in fact, only possible when the man of the sword should be a man of the pen also. Alfred was the sole bookman of his family. Many princes of his house approached his fame as a warrior and a ruler, not one showed the slightest disposition to take his place as guide and fosterer of the national culture; offices which the public opinion of the day assigned to the clergy, and which, rescued in some measure by Alfred's exertions from the barbarism which had all but engulfed them, they proceeded to assume.

Whether Alfred, with all his docile piety, would have regarded this intellectual domination of the clergy as an ideal may well be doubted; but when learning no longer sat upon the throne in his person, the crozier must take the sceptre's vacant

*Consolidation  
of English  
monarchy in  
tenth century*

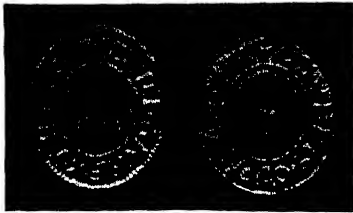
place to prevent his work from perishing. His immediate successors, Edward the Elder and Athelstane, were excellent monarchs who consistently followed up Alfred's policy of the consummation of national unity by the consolidation of Englishmen, whether men of Mercia or men of Wessex, and Danes, whether



Coin of Edward the Elder

men of East Anglia or men of Northumbria, into a single state: a policy which received its visible seal and authentication by Edgar's coronation at Bath in 973. While this unifying movement was progressing in the State, another movement of no less importance was transforming the Church. The ignorance of the clergy, and the vices which were its almost inevitable concomitants, had, as we have seen, excited the animadversion of Alfred, and he had endeavoured to remove them by instruction. After his death, the undertaking for which his successors felt no vocation fell into the hands of the ecclesiastical rulers. It would be unjust to charge them with indifference to the morals or the education of the clergy, but they thought much more of reducing them to the pattern of Roman discipline, and in particular of constraining them to celibacy. Their great weapon was the multiplication of monasteries, and the introduction or restoration of the rule of St. Benedict of Nursia, Abbot of Monte Cassino in the sixth century, and the first great organiser of monasticism in Latin Christendom. Hence a contest between the monastic orders and the regular clergy which lasted from about 940

until nearly the end of the century, and was only in some measure appeased for a time by the drastic remedy of a second cycle of Danish invasion. The Crown, more particularly under Edgar, sided with the monks and the archbishops; the truth seems to be that the irregularities of Edgar's dissolute youth had given the churchmen a strong hold upon him. One of these ecclesiastics, moreover, notwithstanding the ill-repute into which he has been brought by unscrupulous miracle-mongers, was a man of commanding genius and noble nature; and Dunstan (924-988), Archbishop of Canterbury from 961, may well have deemed his ideal of



Coin of Edgar

the religious life higher than that of his opponents. At the time the standard both of morals and of learning was unquestionably highest among the monastic orders: it is only when we consider how infinitely more exalted the standard of the nation at large would have been if, during the centuries between Dunstan and the Reformation, it could have enjoyed

the example of the domestic virtues of a married clergy, that we realise how heavy was the misfortune when the ideas of Latin and Oriental races were thrust upon a people to which they were by nature entirely uncongenial.

*Ecclesiastical  
spirit of  
the age*

The generally ecclesiastical bent of the tenth century in England was not unattended by intellectual advantages, but benefited art rather than literature. The erection of forty richly endowed monasteries promoted architecture, and communicated a still more powerful stimulus to the arts upon which the splendour of religious service depends. Music was greatly improved, and representations of minstrelsy and its instruments are frequent in the richly illuminated manuscripts which became common. Two styles of illumination had since the seventh century existed in the country—the Celtic, introduced by Irish monks into Northumbria, and the classical, prevalent in the South of England. In the tenth century this latter definitively triumphed, but was modified into a new style, distinguished by its elegance and grace. Costume, embroidery, the manufacture of gold and silver plate, received a powerful development. Literature, nevertheless, remained nearly barren save for some outbursts of ballad and patriotic poetry, the consideration of which we defer for the present. The religious poetry of the time is either translated, or repeats familiar ideas. The most important poem, which appears to be a translation from the Low German, is another working up of the story of Genesis, called the “later” or “younger” Genesis to distinguish it from the earlier pieces which pass under the name of Caedmon. The resemblance to Milton is often striking; but if Milton, as in a preceding chapter we have admitted not to be impossible, had access through an interpreter to Anglo-Saxon sources, the reference was

probably made to the so-called "Genesis B." The Low German and Anglo-Saxon poets undoubtedly, Milton less certainly, were not unacquainted with the Latin Christian poet Avitus, Bishop of Vienne, whose poem, *De spiritalis historiae gestis*, written towards the end of the fifth century, was very popular in the middle ages. With the Genesis may be classed the three poems known collectively as *Christ and Satan*, but complete in themselves in so far as they are not mutilated, on the Fall of the Rebel Angels, Christ's Descent into Hell and Ascension, and the Temptation. They have no great poetical pretensions, and their loose structure shows that the severity of the ancient metrical rules was becoming relaxed, but there was no capacity to devise new forms. Some metrical translations from the Latin are only interesting as proofs that Anglo-Saxon poetry was still read or recited, and Latin poetry here and there understood.

In prose the first half of the tenth century was entirely barren but for the contemporary portions of the Saxon Chronicle to be noticed hereafter. Somewhat later we have a *Leech Book* of medical recipes; and the *Blickling Homilies*, for the most part composed about this time, and chiefly interesting as a transition to, and in some measure a contrast with, the more important works of Aelfric, next to be mentioned. The contrast lies in the taste of the Blickling homilists for apocryphal legends and marvels rejected by the sane judgment of Aelfric. The homilies are by different authors. One is dated with the year of delivery, 971; others seem to be considerably older. Blickling is in Norfolk, and these discourses are the first Anglo-Saxon compositions that can be directly connected with East Anglia. If composed for the surrounding population, they would seem to indicate that the speech of the Danish settlers had by this time melted into Anglo-Saxon. Very few Danish words are to be found in Anglo-Saxon literature until after the Conquest.

The principal seat, notwithstanding, of the homiletic literature which was for a time to constitute the chief intellectual feature of the age was not in East Anglia but at Winchester. There Ethelwold, Abbot of Abingdon, a more ardent promoter of monasticism and antagonist of clerical marriage than Dunstan himself, became Bishop in 963. He gave the school of Winchester the same position as a centre of ecclesiastical learning as York had formerly enjoyed, and although no book of importance is attributed to him except a liturgical manual in Latin, he was a man of culture as well as of erudition, and instructed his pupils in poetry as well as in grammar. The first act of his episcopate was to expel the secular clergy from the cathedral and fill their places with monks from Abingdon Abbey. Among these probably came **Aelfric**, the most learned and eloquent man of his time, in whose hands Anglo-Saxon attained not indeed the highest development of which it was capable, but the highest permitted by the circumstances of the age. The most important of his original works are two books of homilies, each containing forty sermons, issued respectively in 991 and 992. Even these

*Aelfric's  
homilies*

are not entirely original, being frequently translated from the Latin; but they are valuable as examples of the best Anglo-Saxon style of the period, and even more so as decisively proving that the Anglo-Saxon Church did not hold the doctrine of Transubstantiation in Aelfric's time. Translations of the sermon on Easter Sunday, where this point is more particularly developed, have been frequently issued, especially by Archbishop Parker and other bishops in 1566, under the title of *A Testimonie of Antiquite*. Aelfric's homilies are further noticeable for their avoidance of apocryphal narratives. The following passage on the birth of the Virgin is characteristic of his mode of thought:—

“What shall we say in regard to the time of Mary's birth, save that she was begotten by her father and mother like other people, and was born on the day that we call *sexta idus Septembris*? Her father was called Joachim and her mother Anna, pious people according to the ancient law, but we will write no more of them lest we fall into some error. The Gospel itself for this day is very hard for laymen to understand; it is, for the most part, filled out with the names of holy men, and these require a very long explanation of their spiritual meaning. Hence we will leave it unsaid.”

Evidently Aelfric preferred the shallows where the child can wade to the deeps where the elephant can swim, and considering the times in which he wrote and the people whom he addressed, his sobriety was eminently judicious. He embodies the best traits of the national character, sturdy veracity and homely common-sense.

Qualities so valuable made Aelfric acceptable to the leading men of his age. He was made Abbot of Cerne, and afterwards of Ensham; he composed discourses for Archbishop Wulfstan of York, and other great ecclesiastics; and after translating the book of Job, he rendered the first seven books of the Old Testament into the vernacular to gratify his chief patron, the Ealdorman Ethelweald. Part he only gave in abridgment, fearing lest his countrymen should conform themselves too literally to the example of the patriarchs. He also incorporates an older version of the earlier portion of Genesis. He further composed in 996 a volume of homilies on the Passions of the Saints, in which, as in some portions of his Biblical translations, he employs an alliterative prose hardly distinguishable from verse. In Latin he produced a valuable life of his original patron, Bishop Ethelwold; a Latin grammar on the model of Donatus and Priscian, dedicated to the youth of England; and a *Colloquium* or exercise in speaking Latin, at the present day the most interesting of all his works for its descriptions of the daily life of men of various classes of society. He was living as late as 1014, when he wrote a pastoral letter, or a portion of one, for Archbishop Wulfstan.

*Other  
ecclesiastical  
writings*

Wulfstan himself has been reckoned among English authors on the strength of a collection of fifty-three homilies composed or translated about the end of the tenth or beginning of the eleventh century, and edited by Professor Napier. Only four are undoubtedly by an author of



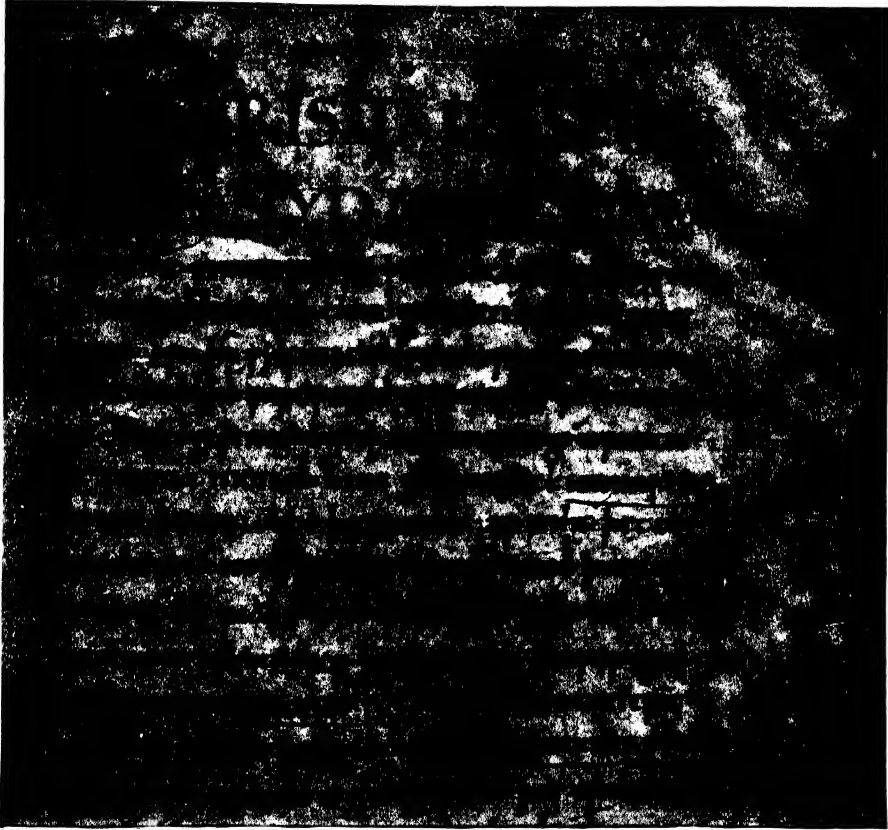
Abriā soðlice wæs swýðe wélg on goldes 7 on seolfe 7 on oðre 7 on  
 geteldū. swa þā land utmakte abepan þā he besen. he 7 loth at  
 gedere wunodon. Heora æhta wifon menig fealde. 7 wemhron  
 wuman at gedere. Weard eac ðar þone mængan sácu becwux  
 abriames hynde mánmū 7 lothes. Ondaðie tīde wunodon chara  
 neor. 7 sef ezeur on ðā lāwe. Abriā hæc wæs to lothe. ic biððe  
 þat nan sácu nesy becwux me. 7 ðe. ne be cwux minū hyndū  
 7 minū hyndū. 7 yc sýnd gebroðra. Ene nū eall seo eorðe līð  
 at forande. ic biððe swa swā me. Gýf ðu wist to þāne wylscnan  
 healfre. ic healde þa swýðran healfre. Gýf þu donne þa swýðran  
 healfre gecyst. ic wiste to þāne wylscnan healfre. Loth ða behæold  
 geond eall. 7 ge seah feall se eard wīða eā iordanes wæs mīn.  
 ge mid watefe gemænged. swa swa godes neorwra wæs. swa swa  
 egyptaland becumendum to regeor. ær þan se god topende ða  
 burga sodomam 7 gomorian.





the name of Wulfstan, and his identity with the Archbishop does not seem certain.

Among other theological productions of the age may be named a version of the Gospels, afterwards published by Archbishop Parker, and commencing that grand series of mediæval translations of the Scriptures in which England surpasses every other country. There is also a version of the apocryphal



From a copy of the Saxon Chronicle in the British Museum

*MS. Tib. B 1*

Gospel of Nicodemus. Aldred's invaluable Northumbrian gloss on the Durham Gospels was probably written about the middle of the tenth century. In didactic literature we have a translation of the distichs of Valerius Cato, and two dialogues in verse and two in prose between Solomon and "Saturn." The origin of these is Hebraic; they belong to the extensive class of writings, founded on the history of the Queen of Sheba's visit to Solomon, in which the wise king is represented in friendly contest with visitors who come to make trial of his wisdom. One of these in the earliest form of Hebrew tradition is Hiram, King of Tyre, whose place at a later period is taken by "Marcolis," no other than Mercurius, whether the Gentile

deity or the Egyptian sage Hermes Trismegistus. Entering Europe, Marcolis became the German Marcolf or Morolf, and by a stroke of genius was transformed into the prototype of Eulenspiegel and Sancho Panza, plain coarse common-sense mocking divine philosophy, and low cunning winning an apparent triumph over lofty but unpractical wisdom. There is nothing of this profound double-edged irony in the Anglo-Saxon pieces, where "Saturn"—how coming by that appellation is hard to tell—manifests no trait of Morolf or Sancho, but is simply a propounder of queries sometimes encountered by meet replies, sometimes by a recital of the wildest imaginings of the Rabbis.

*Danish  
conquest of  
England*

While Aelfric was labouring to instruct the laity and raise the character of the clergy, England was suffering the most grievous calamities from the second series of Danish invasions, which, after many preliminary incursions, commenced systematically about 991, and continued until the general submission of the kingdom to Canute in 1017. The new affliction, however, was more tolerable than the old. The Danes were no longer mere freebooters, but aimed at conquest, and the victory they sought did not, like the subsequent conquest by the Normans, involve the enslavement of the Saxon



Coin of Canute

people, much less their expulsion. Canute, a monarch even greater as statesman than as warrior, sought the fusion of the races under his sceptre, and while retaining his hold upon his hereditary dominions, always regarded England as the chief of his possessions, and himself as before all things King of England. The general conversion of the Northmen to Christianity had removed the chief barrier between the nations, and Canute's piety, which seems to have been no less sincere than politic, won the clergy to loyalty, and contributed to the peaceful establishment of his power. He appears to have been a real patron of ecclesiastical learning, and even more so of minstrelsy and poetry; he was, indeed, himself a poet, and the initial stanza of a lay composed by him has come down to us:—

Merrily sang the monks in Ely  
When Cnut, King, rowed thereby :  
Row, my knights, near the land,  
And hear we these monkes' song.

*Saxon  
Chronicle*

All the words of the original but two are good modern English. Notwithstanding Canute's literary tastes, his reign was unproductive of literature. One work of great value, indeed, was slowly growing up, which, beginning under Alfred, lasted on until Norman times. We must not wait until the Conquest before speaking of the Saxon Chronicle. It is an honourable distinction of England that, while the rude annals of other modern nations have, during the primitive stages of their culture, been usually written in Latin, she possesses her first national history in her



Eadgar offering up his Charter for the new Minster, Winchester, A.D. 966

*British Museum, Coll. MS. tenth century*



advance towards national unity during the middle of the tenth century had not been attended by a simultaneous development of the intellectual life. The recognition, nevertheless, of the importance of the work is shown by the occurrence of MSS. from 900 to 1200. Seven are known, three of which have special importance; the Parker Book at Lambeth, from 891 to 1070; the Worcester Book to 1079; and the Peterborough Book in the Bodleian. Written in the Abbey of Peterborough in the early part of the twelfth century, and continued to the death of King Stephen in 1154, this MS. is by far the fullest. The diction of the latter part is frequently incorrect, showing the transition from Anglo-Saxon to Middle English.

The dryness of the redaction of the Chronicle of the tenth century is relieved by the introduction of four poems on contemporary events, for the preservation of which we are infinitely obliged to the scribes. Three, respectively composed on the expulsion of the Danes from certain Mercian towns (A.D. 942), on the coronation of Edgar (973), and his death (975), have no special poetical merit, but are interesting as expressions of national feeling. The other celebrates the battle of Brunanburh (937), when Athelstan and his brother overthrew the mixed host of Danes, Scots, and Irish who threatened the kingdom with destruction. This song of triumph, belonging to an order of literature popular with all nations since the days of Miriam and Deborah, is an excellent specimen of its class, full of fire and patriotic spirit, exultant in the victory, but not insulting to the foe. It has been frequently translated, and with marked ability by the present Lord Tennyson, whose version forms the basis of a freer rendering by his father. Our extract follows the less poetical version of Thorpe, in which alliteration is sacrificed to literality :

*Poems on  
historical  
events*

Departed then the Northmen  
In their nailed barks,  
The darts gory leaving  
On the roaring sea  
O'er the deep water  
Dublin to seek,  
Ireland once more  
In mind abashed.  
Likewise the brothers  
Both together,  
King and ætheling  
Their country sought  
In the West Saxons' land.  
In war exulting  
They left behind them  
The carcasses to share  
With pallid coat,  
The swart raven  
With hornèd neb,  
And him of goodly coat,  
The eagle white behind,  
The carrion to devour ;

The greedy war hawk,  
 And that grey beast,  
 The wolf in the weald.  
 No slaughter has been greater  
 In this island  
 Ever yet  
 Of folk laid low  
 Before this  
 By the sword's edges  
 From what book tells us,  
 Old chroniclers,  
 Since hither from the east  
 Angles and Saxons  
 Came to land,  
 O'er the broad seas  
 Britain sought,  
 Proud war-smiths,  
 The Welsh o'ercame,  
 Men for glory eager,  
 The country gained.

There is yet another fine example of Anglo-Saxon poetry of the tenth century in the poem on the death of Byrhtnoth, Ealdorman of Essex, who was killed in battle near Maldon while resisting the Danish invasion of 991. The poet describes with great spirit Byrhtnoth's refusal to buy the invaders off, his romantic but inauspicious generosity in allowing them to land that the fight may be on even terms, his death from many wounds in the front of the battle, the flight of some of his companions, the heroic devotion of others: "Byrthwold, the aged comrade, spoke as he grasped fast his shield and shook his ash: 'The spirit should be all the harder, the heart all the bolder, the courage should be the greater, the more our forces lessen; here lieth our prince cut down, the brave one, slain in the dust. May he ever mourn who thinketh now to turn from this battle-play. I am old in days, I will not go away, but I think to lie by my lord's side; I will lie by such a beloved warrior.'" Here the MS. is mutilated, and the poem breaks off.

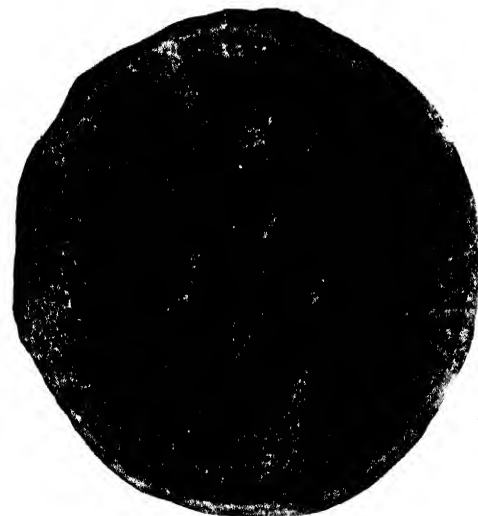
Little more poetry of this description is to be found in the remaining period of Anglo-Saxon literature, or, indeed, much literature of any kind. The national spirit needed renovation. As M. Jusserand justly remarks: "In spite of the efforts of Cynewulf, Alfred, Dunstan, and Aelfric, literature goes on repeating itself. Poems, histories, and sermons are conspicuous, now for their grandeur, now for the emotion that is in them; but their main qualities and main defects are very much alike; they give an impression of monotony. The same notes, not very numerous, are incessantly repeated. Literature is almost stationary, it does not move and develop. A graft is wanted."

The justice of these remarks is shown by the turn which affairs took under Edward the Confessor (1042-1066). Edward's partiality for the Normans among whom he had been educated angered his subjects, who

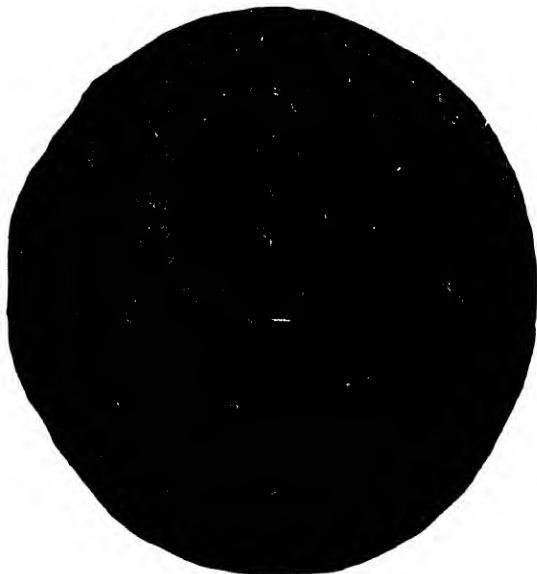
could not perceive that the powerful, and for the age highly civilised state which had grown up on the other side of the Channel must of necessity exercise a strong attractive influence upon one more torpid and backward. They were displeased when Edward for the first time affixed a seal to his charters, a custom borrowed from the Normans; they liked still less the chancellors, clerks, chaplains, legal and spiritual advisers whom he brought from beyond the sea. These were but the forerunners of the great intellectual change which must needs occur if England was ever to hold a foremost place among the nations, which must have come even if there never had been any material Norman Conquest. Such

literary vitality as the age possessed asserted itself in the endeavour to naturalise a Norman form of literature, the romance. The Normans had not invented, probably at this time not even translated, the romances of

Alexander and of Apollonius of Tyre, but they admired the class of literature of which these were types, and the translation into Anglo-Saxon of Alexander's supposititious letters to Aristotle, and of the probably Byzantine romance of Apollonius, which seems to have come into England through a Latin version, the earliest known copy of which belongs to the ninth or tenth century, were evidences of a new attraction beginning to be exercised upon the Anglo-Saxon mind, which might have produced considerable effect upon



Seal of Edward the Confessor (reverse)



Seal of Edward the Confessor (obverse)

Anglo-Saxon literature but for the temporary abolition of that literature by the stroke of conquest. This convulsion occurring, as there is every reason to suppose, shortly after the Apollonius romance had been translated,

found and left it the sole representative of its class in Anglo-Saxon. One redeeming feature of the time should not remain unnoticed, that disposition to transcribe ancient writings which produced the priceless Exeter and Vercelli MSS.

Arrived as we are at the eve of a great crisis, it will not be uninteresting to cast a glance upon literature at the other side of the world. In the Far East is a chain of great islands not unlike the British Isles in their configuration, resembling them still more in their physical relation to the adjacent continent and the individuality of the race inhabiting them, and indebted for their civilisation to China, as England to Italy. While, however, intellectual England of the eleventh century is stagnation, intellectual Japan is all animation and brightness. When hardly one Englishwoman could write her name, the literature of eleventh-century Japan was mainly provided by ladies, who displayed qualities akin to those which were to characterise French epistolary and memoir literature in future ages. The comparison seems most mortifying in retrospect, but would have failed to move the contemporaries of Edward the Confessor, who had as little conception of the height from which European literature had descended, or of the possibilities of recovery, as of the dignity and preciousness of literature herself, apart from utility or amusement.





## CHAPTER III

### EARLY ENGLISH LITERATURE TO "PIERS PLOWMAN"

WE have now accompanied English literature to the eve of the most violent and abrupt transformation ever wrought in that of any people. It is no uncommon circumstance for a literature to undergo profound modification through contact with another in presence of whose superior refinement the old hereditary forms are no longer able to hold their ground. Acquaintance with Greek literature thus remodelled the literature of Rome, and Italian forms of verse displaced the national metres of Portugal and Spain. But sweeping as these changes might be, they did not destroy the continuity of literary tradition. No one would think of separating the primitive stages of Latin and Spanish literature from the more recent, and making them the subject of distinct histories. With English literature it is otherwise, a gulf yawns at the Conquest, and although some stragglers cross the gap, like plants of one zone of vegetation straying into another, we soon become conscious that the conditions of soil and climate have undergone vast mutation, and that Anglo-Saxon literature as we have hitherto known it can exist no more. The case is wholly different from that of Latin borrowings from Greece. Greek literature was recommended solely by its superiority; had the Romans been incapable of perceiving this they could no more have been compelled to conform themselves to Hellenic models than the modern Germans can be compelled to adopt the Roman character in writing and printing. In England, however, new literary forms and a new literary language were established upon the same soil as the old, pressing upon and permeating these at every point, and leaving them no choice but to amalgamate with the innovators, or to be crushed out of existence.

*Transformation of English literature by the Norman Conquest*

It will have been observed that at the time of the Conquest the condition of Anglo-Saxon literature was by no means vigorous. It would indeed be an entire error to assert, as was at one time generally held, that the Danish invasion had reduced the people to barbarism, and that letters were virtually extinct among them. We have seen, on the contrary, that men of considerable learning were still to be found, and even that literature was evincing vitality by assimilating a new form, the romance. It is nevertheless true that

after the repulse of the great Danish invasions of the ninth century the national energy in intellectual things seemed impaired, and that such mental life as remained chiefly expended itself in ecclesiastical, rather than even theological controversies. It is but just to remark that this coincided with a general lowering of the intellectual level all over Europe, excepting the stationary Byzantine Empire and the then brilliant caliphate of Cordova, by neither of which could England be materially affected. Everywhere else the tenth century is an age of intellectual dearth, and even the few who impressed themselves upon their contemporaries as men of intellect, such as Dunstan and Gerbert, were rather distinguished as administrators or natural philosophers than as authors. A new type of character, meanwhile, was slowly coming to the birth in a corner of France, where, throughout the tenth century, the fusion of Frank, Celt, and Scandinavian was producing the Norman, like the ancient Viking a conqueror and a freebooter, but rather the propagator than the enemy of culture.

Had the Norman invasion of England failed, the animosity engendered between the nations would probably have long preserved Anglo-Saxon literature without material modification; but had it never been attempted the influence of Norman example upon England must still have been very considerable. We should have found Norman vocables, metres, ways of thought, gradually becoming naturalised by the influence of foreign visitors, courtiers, and ecclesiastics; and the effect upon our speech would have been far more disastrous than that which actually resulted from its temporary proscription as a vehicle of literature. Instead of that complete fusion between the Teutonic and Romance elements which now endows our language with such copiousness, and so happy a choice of alternative words, we should, as in the German of the seventeenth century, have had the new element uncouthly grafted on the old. French idioms would have little by little insinuated themselves, and the result would have been not renovation but corruption. The sharp and long-continued severance between the tongues, which could have been maintained in no other way than by one ranking as the language of the lord and the other as that of the serf, brought at last an alliance on equal terms, producing an amalgamation more complete than has often been effected in the case of languages so dissimilar in vocabulary and in genius.

We have now to follow the course of both languages until, alike in a linguistic and a literary point of view, they have become one. At the moment where we now find ourselves, the year of the Conquest (1066), they present a striking contrast. Each, indeed, has a great epic, Anglo-Saxon has *Beowulf*, Norman has, or is on the point of having, the *Chanson de Roland*. But the Anglo-Saxon poem, and hardly less the works of Caedmon, Cynewulf, and their circles, have almost fallen into oblivion, while Norman songs, fresh and full of vitality, are sung by the Norman soldiers on the eve of battle:

In the deep blue of eve,  
 Ere the twinkling of stars had begun,  
 Or the lark took his leave  
 Of the skies and the bright setting sun ;

I stood on the heights  
 Where the Norman encamped him of old,  
 With his barons and knights,  
 And their banners all brodered with gold.

Soon the ramparted ground  
 With a vision my fancy inspires,  
 And I hear the trump sound  
 As it marshalled our chivalry's sires.

By the Conqueror's side  
 There his minstrelsy sit harp in hand,  
 In pavilion wide,  
 As they chanted the song of Roland.

Over hauberk and helm  
 As the sun's setting splendour was thrown,  
 They looked over a realm,  
 And the morrow beheld it their own !

CAMPBELL

So it continues, Norman literature throwing off a brilliant swarm of new productions, Anglo-Saxon literature apparently dead, and unquestionably dumb. Yet the stream is still flowing underground, and we must endeavour to trace its secret course, relinquishing the more showy productions of the Norman to the historian of French literature, except in so far as they react upon the literature of England, as we shall soon find to be the case.

The first effect wrought by the Conquest upon the English language was its proscription as the speech of men of rank. An entirely new aristocracy had supervened, which knew it only as the dialect of churls and boors. It was not, like the ancient British, driven away ; there is no vestige of any attempt to suppress it ; the Saxons were allowed to speak it among themselves as much as they pleased, and might no doubt have written in it too if they had desired. All inducement to composition in the vernacular, however, had for the time disappeared ; the readers of books, always few, had been slain, or Normanised, or driven to dwell among illiterate serfs. The immediate consequence was a great impoverishment of the language. The words necessary for the purposes of practical life were retained, but the vocabularies of philosophy, art, and science, and the figurative language of poetry, fell into abeyance. It is said to be surprising at the present day how few words suffice an ordinary labourer, and speech hardly more copious served for a time the needs of the people of England. Hence the discontinuity which in spite of plausible cavils, average common-sense well expresses by employing the term Anglo-Saxon to denote our tongue in its pre-Norman period, reserving the title of English until the twelfth century. For

*Temporary  
 eclipse of  
 literature*

generations the language, in Aubrey's phrase, "delitesced," and when it came forth from its retirement a gap had been created between it and its Anglo-Saxon forerunner, marking the commencement of a new era. This would not have been the case had it remained the language of court and society; modifications would have gradually established themselves, and the influence of Norman literature might have been even more immediate and apparent, for the scanty Anglo-Saxon remains of the eleventh and twelfth centuries exhibit the English vocabulary as but little altered. The total suppression of Anglo-Saxon as a literary language left it free to shape itself as a popular speech, and it will be our task briefly to trace the vicissitudes it underwent until its reappearance as Early English.

*Effects of the  
Conquest on  
the English  
language*

We have already observed that if the Danes had effected a complete conquest of England in the ninth century, the consequence must have been a new language and a new literature. The male part of the Saxon population would have been slain or driven away, as the Britons had been before them, and the conquerors would have preserved their native speech. By repulsing the Danes Alfred preserved the English language, but in so doing he laid the foundation of a new English which he in no respect foresaw. Unable to expel the invaders from the country, he was compelled to assign to them a Mercian Danelagh, as it has been well called, which may be defined as consisting, in addition to the three maritime East Anglian counties, Lincoln, Norfolk, and Suffolk, of the inland shires of Derby, Rutland, Nottingham, Northampton, Bedfordshire, Huntingdonshire, and Cambridgeshire, with part of South and East Yorkshire, and of Warwickshire. The Danes nevertheless received this region as Alfred's vassals, and had to live in peace with the Saxons whom they found already there. The same result ensued as in Normandy; the intruders adopted the language of the original inhabitants. We have seen that the Blickling Homilies, written, as is to be supposed, in Norfolk, and intended for Norfolk auditors, are composed in Anglo-Saxon, though Anglo-Saxon of a more classic type than the congregation is likely to have generally understood. For, although the vocabulary of Anglo-Saxon was but slightly affected by the intermixture of populations, its structure became considerably modified. It lost much of its original character as an inflected language. It is always difficult to preserve in the mouths of the vulgar elaborate niceties of speech of which they do not see the use; but the difficulty is much increased when they are habitually associating with neighbours to whom these niceties present real obstacles. In such a case the tendencies to linguistic degradation, always potent, become irresistible, or at least the imperilled standard can only be preserved by the general diffusion of literature written in conformity with classical precepts. If every Saxon and every Dane had had a Bible in pure Saxon, and been able and accustomed to read it, the process of linguistic decay might have been arrested, but in the

absence of any such preservative, the dialect of the Mercian Danelagh, from which the New English was to spring, was probably at the date of the Conquest the most corrupt in England. All the time the Court at Winchester, the centre of refinement, was writing and speaking pure Wessex Saxon, careless what kind of dialect might be used in the Danelagh. The Conquest deprived this Wessex speech of every adventitious advantage, and when compelled to compete with other dialects its very purity proved a disqualification, while the rude simplicity of the Dano-Mercian gave this the same advantage as the freedom of the English tongue from inflections gives it at this day in the struggle for existence with more highly-organised languages. Other causes, to be afterwards adverted to, no doubt contributed to make the East-country dialect the direct ancestor of our modern English, a result deplorable in the estimation of the Anglo-Saxon scholar of that age, but practically most serviceable by facilitating the fusion of English and French speech, so necessary to the development of both.

It must be remembered that the gradual progress of the East Mercian speech towards the position of a dominant dialect did not for a long time materially affect the other forms of the language. Of the Northumbrian of this period we have indeed no relics, owing to the devastations of William the Conqueror in Northern England, and the anarchy and general backwardness of the Scotch Lowlands. Of the Western speech, however, both in the Western counties and the West Midlands, we have considerable remains, and shall shortly, in the process of our history, have to notice one of very great importance, the epic of Layamon. For the present this form of speech may be defined as a classic Anglo-Saxon gradually yielding to dialectical corruptions, and may be characterised as something much nearer to German than the East Mercian, which on its side is much nearer to modern English. A few words selected from the Wessex version of the *Magnificat*, made in the twelfth century, will show how closely it adheres to the Teutonic stem to which modern German has clung while modern English has deviated :

*Anglo-Saxon  
dialects*

Saxon.	Modern German.	Modern English.
Hælend.	Heiland.	Saviour.
Ofermode.	Uebermuthige.	Proud.
Warp.	Warf.	Cast.
Cniht.	Knecht.	Servant.

All these Teutonic words were no doubt fully intelligible to an Anglo-Saxon of the Eastern counties, and might have been used by him even at a later date, but it is doubtful whether the Latin and Norman words which were beginning to steal into the speech of Londoners would have been intelligible to a West Saxon. The latter, consequently, was at a disadvantage in the struggle for existence. For a time, however, any struggle was barely noticeable. No English dialect claimed any pre-eminence over another. If a scribe had to deal with a diction unfamiliar to him he altered it into that of his own locality, and hence we cannot always tell in what part of the country

an English text of the period was originally written. All the varying dialects of this transition period, down to about the middle of the thirteenth century, are grouped under the general denomination of Semi-Saxon. About 1120, nevertheless, we remark an evident transition into modern English, which has received the name of Middle English, to discriminate it alike from this

and from the Old English or Anglo-Saxon which still prevailed in the western part of the country.

A date is a convenient thing, even if it cannot be made precisely accurate. The first literary manifestation of the Middle English, which had for more than a century been growing up in the Eastern Midlands, may be assigned to the year 1120, about which time the old Saxon Chronicle began to be rewritten at Peterborough. The Abbey of Peterborough had been burned down in 1116, and the monastery's copy of the Chronicle was consumed along with it. While restoring the Abbey, as it is

Anglo-Saxon  
and Semi-Saxon



The West Prospect, or Front, of the Cathedral Church of Peterborough

From Willis Browne's "Survey of Cathedrals," 1742

seen to-day in the magnificent semblance of Peterborough Cathedral, the monks did not forget to restore the Chronicle. Copyists were sent to transcribe the versions of it preserved in other abbeys, and these, to the great moral discredit of the brethren, but the great gain of the philologist, were incorporated with a quantity of fictitious matter designed to promote the interests of the Abbey of Peterborough, and manufactured for that purpose within its walls. These apocrypha were drawn up in the dialect spoken by the monks themselves, and calmly set side by side with genuine documents professedly of the same periods, but entirely differing in dialect. We are thus enabled to contrast the Semi-Saxon of 1120-1130 with the Anglo-Saxon. It would be most interesting to set forth the most important changes in detail, but our business

is with literature, and with language only in so far as this illustrates literature. It must suffice to observe that every change, and particularly as regards the loss of inflections and the general physiognomy of words, tends to bring the language nearer to our modern speech, and to chasten the Teutonism so apparent in Anglo-Saxon. To a good English scholar of the day the innovations must have appeared symptoms of degeneracy, and such indeed they were. English would have been in danger of becoming a poor, rustic idiom, but for the regenerating infusion of Latin and French, whose time was not yet. But, little as they knew it, by depriving English of its elaborate structure, and rendering it grammatically the simplest of languages, the Midlanders were adapting it to become the language of the world.

Before passing to the two really important poems which respectively illustrate the Middle and the Southern English speech of the end of the twelfth century, we must notice a few interesting relics of earlier date. First among them is the continuation

of the Saxon Chronicle during the reign of Stephen, written at Peterborough, and finished in 1154, the year of the accession of Henry the Second, and a great turning-point in English history. In these latter pages the Chronicler rises beyond the rank of an annalist, and shows something of the instinct of an historian in the selection of circumstances by which he depicts the nineteen years of wretchedness under Stephen. When, he says, the robber barons had taken everything they could out of the towns by exactions, they plundered and burned them, insomuch that "thou might'st go a whole day's journey and never shouldest thou find a man sitting in a town, nor the land tilled." To plough the soil was to plough the sea. If two men or three came riding to a town, all the township fled from them, concluding them to be robbers. The descriptions of castles

ge þas wið þam byrgenne.

na sabbati maria magdalene uent mane cū  
adhuc tenebr essent ad monumentum. & uidit  
linden sublatum amonumento.

**P**roodlice on anan ieste dæge sƿe magda,  
lenfse mayne com on mornen ær hƿo  
leohte ƿære to ƿære beƿegenne. 7 hƿo ze  
seah hæc se stan ƿas aƿeg anumen fram  
ƿære beƿegenne. Ða ær hƿe 7 com to symo-  
ne petre. 7 to þam oðre leorning cnihton. þe  
se halend lufode. And hƿe cƿæd to heom. hƿo  
namen drihten of beƿegenne. 7 þe nƿton hƿær  
hƿe hime legdon. Petrus eode ut. 7 se oðer  
leorning cniht. 7 com in to ƿære beƿegenne.  
Proodlice hƿe tƿegen upnen æt gadene. 7 se oðer  
leorning cniht for ær petre 7 oðre. 7 com riðen  
to ƿære beƿegenne. And ƿa he inder abetg he  
seah þa linyæde luggen. 7 ne eode þeah in. Proo-  
dlice simon petrus com æfter hƿm and eode in  
to ƿære beƿegenne. 7 he ze seah linyæd luggen 7  
hær sƿar lin he ƿas up on luf heafde. ne lƿ hƿe  
na mid þam linyædon æc on sunon fram  
þam oðren ze fælden on aƿe stope. þa eode eac  
in se leorning cniht þe æræt com to ƿære  
beƿegenne 7 ze seah 7 ze lede. Proodlice þa zere

*Continuation  
of Saxon  
Chronicle*

Page from the Hatton Gospels

*From the MS. in the Bodleian Library*

and castellans would have fully justified Scott's picture of Torquilstone and Front-de-Bœuf, perhaps over-coloured for the time of Cœur de Lion, if it had been placed at this period. The climax of iniquity, in the monk's opinion, was that the miscreants robbed spiritual persons and burned churches, though it does not appear that they proceeded so far as to burn monasteries. "The bishops and learned men cursed them continually, but the effect thereof was nothing to them."

*Ethical and  
religious  
writings*

In the next place mention should be made of the so-called Proverbs of King Alfred, probably a composition of this period, but at all events expressed in its debased diction. They constitute a body of precepts ascribed to Alfred, and severally prefaced by "Thus said Alfred." They are in general sound but commonplace embodiments of morality and worldly wisdom, but possess a pathetic interest as lookings back to a better time, and testimonies to the great king's place in the hearts of his conquered and oppressed people. More important in a literary point of view is the appearance of rhyme as a competitor with alliteration, "the ancient long line," says Ten Brink, "in the midst of its transformation into the shortest couplet." This is a novelty, the Saxons previous to the Conquest employed rhyme only as an exercise of ingenuity. It was, moreover, a development in harmony with the period, for it appears in connection with homilies written about the middle of the century. One of these, generally known as *The Moral Poem*, is a sermon in verse, expressing an old man's remorse and apprehension on the retrospect of a wasted life, together with other topics familiar to mediæval preachers. Metrically it is of much importance for the new principles of accentuation which it develops; nor, as is shown by the modern rendering, is it devoid of poetical power:

"I've spoken many idle words since I to speak was able;  
Full many deeds I've done that now seem most unprofitable;  
And almost all that I once liked is hateful now to me;  
Who follows overmuch his will, himself deceiveth he.  
I might in truth have better done had my ill-luck been less;  
Now that I would, I can no more for age and helplessness.  
Old age his footstep on me stole ere I his coming wist;  
I could not see before me for the dark smoke and mist.  
Laggards we are in doing good, in evil all too bold;  
Men stand in greater fear of man than of the Christ of old.  
Who doth not well the while he may repenting oft shall rue  
The day when men shall mow and reap what they erstwhile did strew."

Along with the more modern homilies come new recensions of Aelfric's sermons, expressed in the language of the time, but garbled to suit the doctrine of Transubstantiation which Norman and Italian ecclesiastics had introduced into the English Church. Somewhat later the versions of the Gospels made in Ethelred's time were converted into the English of the day, and, in memory of the presentation of the MSS. to the Bodleian by Viscount Hatton, are now known as the Hatton Gospels. Philologically they are, of course, exceedingly interesting, and are further memorable as the last vernacular



versions of the Bible, other than metrical paraphrases mixed up with comment, or mere psalms or canticles, which the priesthood allowed to be put forth until Wycliffe's revolt in the fourteenth century. About 1180 another set of homilies was composed, probably in Essex. These exhibit a transition or compromise between the South Saxon still spoken with many corruptions

mess lapeþ þu. 7 but geþ  
 hi. 7 luteþ. 7 cume þe eft on  
 7 an tūll me. 7 pteþ þe me to  
 seggen. Ðæt ic me muge  
 finden hi. to lakeñ him. 7 lu-  
 ten. 7 7 tegg þa penðen frad þe  
 þig. 7 tūll þe geþe pūhtce þe  
 ge. 7 tegg þe æt eorne þa ssem  
 to d. full næd is upp olistte. 7 to  
 ledenn hem þa tte þe geþe pūhtce  
 þa tte lagg to þa pūht tate ches-  
 tre. þa tte þa ssem gehaten beþ-  
 leant. þa tte chist þa ssem boþen  
 inne. 7 off þa tte tegg sa gen  
 eft. þa tte pūhtce þe hem ledde.

From the MS. of the "Ormulum" (early thirteenth century)

*Preserved in the Bodleian Library, Oxford*

in London and the East Midland dialect; there are also many words derived from other sources, and many new meanings of words.

We must now proceed to the two great poems which were produced at the end of the eleventh or beginning of the twelfth century. The *Ormulum*, indeed, is great only in bulk, and by the injury of time is grievously impaired even in this respect. As a philological monument, nevertheless, it is of the highest importance. It and its companion, the far more interesting *Brut* of Layamon, lift themselves above the receding deluge of foreign conquest, public misery, and literary dearth and debase-

*The*  
*"Ormulum"*

ment, like the twin peaks of Parnassus after the flood of Deucalion. This, it must be feared, is nearly all the affinity discoverable between Parnassus and the *Ormulum*, the most edifying, the dullest, and in its original shape almost the biggest poem produced before the invention of printing. The intercession of Minerva, as is to be supposed, has preserved one-eighth of the hundred and sixty thousand lines so justly obnoxious to the wrath of Apollo, and enriched English literature with one of its most valuable philological monuments. When it is considered that the author not merely composed all this prodigious mass from a sense of duty, but most probably wrote it all out fairly with his own hand, it is impossible not to admire his stubborn tenacity, and to recognise in a bad poet some of the qualities which have made England a great country. There is also quite an Ozymandyan pathos in the minuteness of his directions to future scribes for the correct copying of a poem which probably was never transcribed by any one but himself.

*Character  
and history  
of the book*

*Ormulum*, so named "for that Orm wrought it," is a monument of the Mercian dialect, and the production of Orm or Ormin, an Augustinian monk, who probably lived in Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, or Northamptonshire. It is a metrical paraphrase of the Gospels of the year, accompanied by a commentary, also metrical, mainly derived from Beda and Pope Gregory. Though Orm does not say so, the work may have been undertaken as a protest against the ecclesiastical discouragement of vernacular versions of the Bible. It is at all events entirely in the traditional Anglo-Saxon spirit, and uninfluenced by the modern schools of theology. Whether on this account, or from sacerdotal opposition, or merely from its cumbrousness, it totally failed to realise its author's intention. The history of the only known MS. is curious. It must have slumbered in some monastic library until the Dissolution, when, after what adventures cannot be told, the ejected and mutilated remnant found its way in 1659 to the library of Mynheer Van Vliet at Breda, and was described in the sale catalogue of his collection (1666) as "an old Swedish or Gothic book on the Gospel." It was purchased by Franciscus Junius, the great restorer of Anglo-Saxon studies, and was bequeathed by him, together with his *Caedmon* and other manuscripts, to the Bodleian. Had it been lost, Orm and his work would never have been heard of. The MS. is described as "written on parchment on folio leaves, very long and narrow (averaging twenty inches by eight) in a very broad and rude hand, with many additions inserted on extra parchment scraps." These additions seem to indicate beyond doubt that the MS. is the author's autograph, or at least written under his eye. Twenty-seven leaves appear to be wanting. The tone of the author's dedication to his brother Walter appears to imply that he had rendered all the Gospels, and written all the commentaries; and, indeed, such a piece of metrical monotony, once set chiming, might well get finished, as Shelley says certain books get sold, mechanically. Whether, however, the whole was ever fairly transcribed is not quite certain.

The illustration we have here given from the *Ormulum* exhibits to the full the peculiarities of the “very broad and rude hand” spoken of above. Those of the manuscripts of other English books which we shall have occasion to illustrate, though less rude than this, are yet plain and undecorated, a clear proof that they were written for no wealthy book lovers. For comparison with them we give on pages 80 and 83 two pages from manuscripts written in England during the thirteenth century which illustrate the beauty of the ornamentation in which the best English work of that period rivalled that of France. A comparison of the two classes of manuscripts shows the humble position which the vernacular literature then occupied in England.

*Palaeography  
of the  
“Ormulum”*

The poetical merits of Orm’s work are entirely negative; it is to be commended for its simplicity. Philologically and metrically it is, after Layamon’s *Brut*, the most important work of its time. The author stands chronologically on the border-line between pure English and Latinised speech; but so little is he affected by the influences even then working to transform the language that he barely uses half-a-dozen French words, and his few Latin phrases are ecclesiastical, and may be termed technical. “He is,” says Mr. Kington-Oliphant, “the last of our English Makers who can be said to have drunk from the pure Teutonic well.” Belonging to the Mercian Danelagh, he has many Scandinavian words, and many words now in use are found for the first time in him.

*Its vocabulary*

The *Ormulum* is also of importance metrically, from the consistency of the metrical structure. Orm’s metre is substantially the same as that of the *Poema Morale*, a fifteen-syllable couplet, exact in rhythm, with something of rhyme and frequent alliteration, but no absolute system of either.

“Orm,” says Mr. Gollancz, “was a purist in orthography as well as in vocabulary, and may fittingly be described as the first of English phoneticians. The *Ormulum* is perhaps the most valuable document we possess for the history of English sounds.” His system of verse was probably adopted less on æsthetical grounds than with the purpose of impressing his teaching upon the memory of his hearers, for it must be remembered that he did not write for a reading public. The same circumstance explains much of his tedious repetition, and the simplicity and perspicuity of his syntax.

A didactic motive cannot be alleged to account for the peculiarities of the other chief poetical production of the time, the *Brut* of Layamon, the work of a real poet, and a landmark in English literature. It is Layamon’s especial significance to symbolise the reconciliation then beginning to take place between the three long divided races of Saxon, Celt, and Norman, which he does both in virtue of his own personality and of the origin and subject of his poem. As the name imports, the groundwork of the *Brut* is the fabulous history of the settlement in Britain of Brutus and his Trojans, and, although in fact much more, it is professedly a paraphrase of the *Brut* of the French poet Wace, author of the *Roman de Rou*. The French *Brut* was written in 1155. Here, then, we have the English resorting to their conquerors for a theme, and admitting the legendary history of their now

*Layamon’s  
“Brut”*

common country to be a subject of equal interest to both. But we must go farther back. Wace himself derived his tale from the Latin *Historia Britonum* of Geoffrey of Monmouth, written about 1147, which has been

justly called "a cornerstone of romance." Geoffrey was neither Englishman nor Norman, but a Welshman, born in the then Cymric town of Monmouth, and whose native speech was Welsh. In his time Welsh was but slightly differentiated from Breton, and there seems reason to believe that, in so far as his history did not follow Nennius, it was derived from a book of Breton legends, now lost. Among them was the tale of the Trojan colonisation of Britain, which could not have arisen either among Celts or Teutons until they had come under Latin influence; but, once invented, was soon accepted as an unquestionable fact. The doctrine of Nature's abhorrence of a vacuum, whether true or false in physics, is an indubitable verity in the things of the mind. All men rejoiced to see the chaos of Britain's primeval history abolished by so excellent an invention, and a myth of yesterday was credited with as undoubt-



Christ and the Doctors

From Royal MS. 2B VII. (in the British Museum) known as Queen Mary's Psalter. Early fourteenth century

ing a faith as if it had come down from the Flood. Its moral and political effects were most salutary. "The *Historia Britonum*," says Geoffrey's biographer, "exercised a powerful influence in the unification of the people of England. The race animosities of Briton, Teuton, and Frenchman would probably have endured much longer than they did but for the legend of an origin common to them all."

Layamon's circumstances pointed him out as a man meet to enrich the literature of his people with this reconciling volume. He was an Englishman, and dwelt in England, but his home closely adjoined the Welsh border, being, as he says, "at Ernley, at a noble church on the Severn's bank ; it seemed to him good to be there. Fast by Radestone, there he read book." That is, he was parish priest of Arel-y Regis, a North Worcestershire village upon the Severn, four miles south of Kidderminster, and within two or three miles of the Bishop of Worcester's residence at Hartlebury ; and close to his abode the river is overhung by a cliff called Redstone to this day.

*Layamon's  
circumstances*

As Layamon's situation was near the borderland between two races, so was his book compacted out of three literatures, besides a fourth which he does not expressly mention. Having conceived the idea of writing the legendary, by him held in good faith for the true, history of his country, he made a pilgrimage in quest of materials, and obtained "the English book made by Beda" (*i.e.* King Alfred's translation), "the Latin one of St. Albin and Austin" (no other, as would appear, than Beda's own Latin, in which he was assisted by Albinus, Abbot of Canterbury in his time), and Wace's *Brut d'Angleterre*. He was therefore acquainted with both Latin and French, as he speedily demonstrated :—

*His method  
of composition*

Layamon leide theos boc,  
& tha leaf wende.  
he heom leofliche bi-heold,  
lithe him beo drihten.  
fetheren he nom mid fingren,  
& fiede on boc-felle,  
& tha sothe word  
sette to-gadere :  
& tha thre boc  
thrumde to ane.

"Layamon laid before him these books, and turned over the leaves ; lovingly he beheld them. May the Lord be merciful to him ! Pen he took with fingers and wrote on book-skin, and the true words set together ; and the three books compressed into one."

"We suspect," the *Quarterly Reviewer* adds, "that the art of *thrumming* three or more old books into one new one is by no means obsolete among original authors of the present day ; though perhaps few of them would avow it so frankly as the good priest of Erneleye." In fact, Layamon does himself an injustice. He is not so much a compiler as he makes himself appear, nor even a translator so much as a paraphraser who puts new life and spirit into his original, which he at the same time greatly enriches and expands. His indebtedness is chiefly to Wace's *Brut*, and this is equally indebted to him. Before, however, discussing his character as a poet, it will be convenient to give the literary history of his work, which is very simple. The only historical event actually alluded to is the burning of Leicester in 1173, but the poet's language in speaking of Queen Eleanor, consort of Henry the Second, shows that he wrote after her death in 1204, while a hint that "Peter's pence" might

*Probable date  
of Layamon's  
"Brut"*

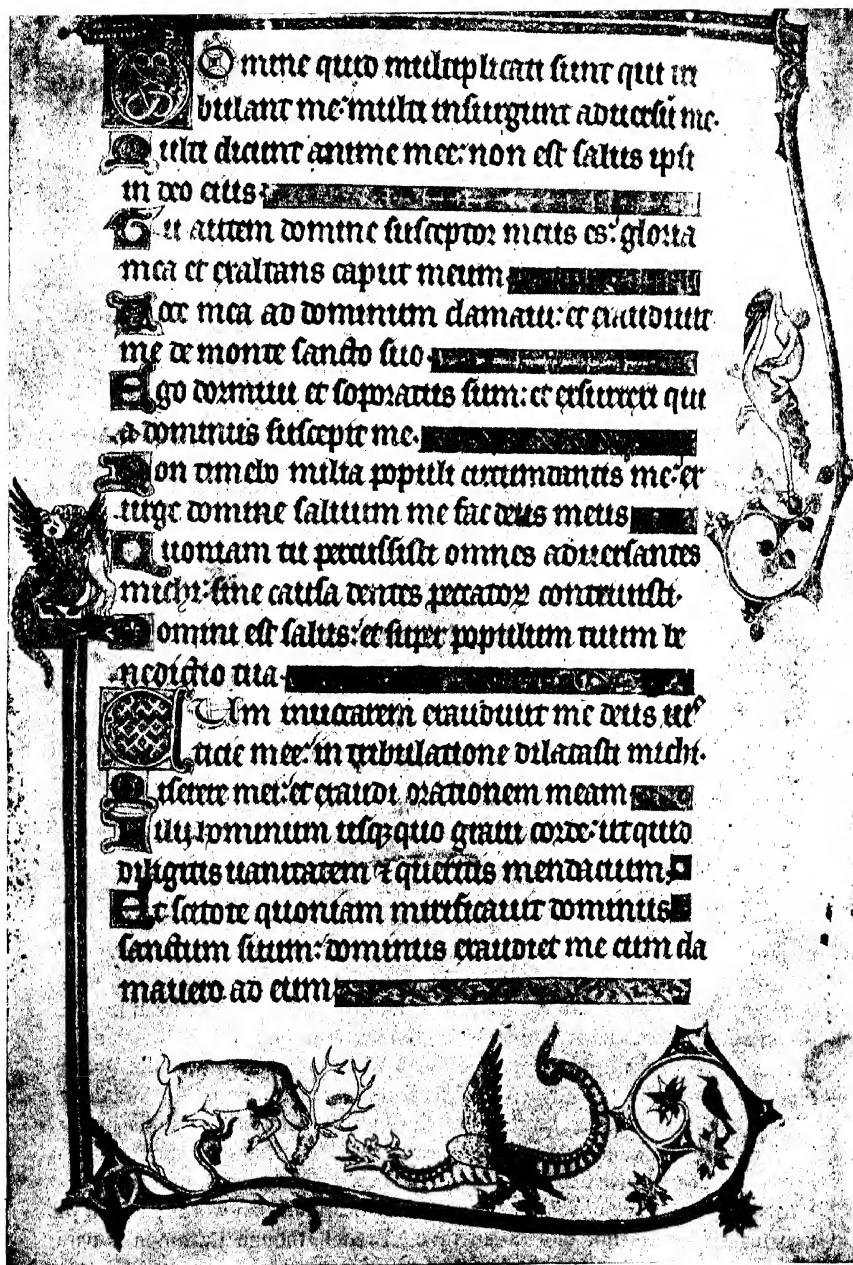
shortly cease to be paid is plausibly connected by his editor, Sir Frederic Madden, with an agitation against that impost in the following year. The *Brut* is thus very nearly contemporary with the *Ormulum*. It exists in two manuscripts written within fifty years of each other, the later of which reveals "numerous liberties by the more recent transcriber in transposing, altering, or abridging those passages which he did not like or could not understand." Both are reproduced in Sir Frederic Madden's edition (1847), at present the only edition, and more likely to be republished than superseded.

*Celtic influences on Layamon*

It is frequently found that after one race of men has expelled another, and appropriated its habitations, the remnants of the conquered people pass into the legendary poetry of the intruding tribe, and become objects of ideal admiration, sometimes even of superstitious awe. Such is now very generally deemed to have been the real origin of the folk-lore relating to the fairies, the good people of the hills. Such was in a measure the position of the Finns and Laplanders towards their Scandinavian supplanters; and in Ceylon and Madagascar at this day exist the remains of feeble, primitive races, venerated by the descendants of those by whom their ancestors were dispossessed. So in the England of the twelfth century we perceive traces of a Celtic revival. The Norman poet Wace resorts for his British epic to a Celtic source, and renders Geoffrey of Monmouth. As a native of Jersey, he may well have boasted some strain of Celtic blood, but his acquaintance with Celtic traditions can hardly have been other than merely literary. Layamon, on the other hand, though a perfect Saxon, as evinced by the name of his father, Leofenath, which is found in Herefordshire as early as the tenth century, had been born and brought up in a semi-Celtic atmosphere. He is consequently more Celtic than his original, and makes large additions to Wace's comparatively arid narrative, partly from Geoffrey of Monmouth, partly, as there is every reason to think, from popular traditions current in Wales and on the Welsh border. Others are Anglo-Saxon; others, such as that of the wondrous smith who forges Arthur's armour, descend from the earliest ages of Indo-European mythology. Sir Frederic Madden enumerates between thirty and forty remarkable episodes in Layamon not to be found in Wace. Two of the most interesting of his Celtic traditions occur neither in Wace nor Geoffrey; the dream which, warning Arthur of Modred's treachery, recalls him from Gaul to Britain as he is meditating the conquest of Rome; and his conveyance by the Fairy Queen to the isle of Avalon, so marvellously exalted in our own time by the genius of Tennyson.

*Layamon's merits as a poet*

It would have sufficed for the fame of Layamon had he been no more than the first minstrel to celebrate Arthur in English song, but his own pretensions as a poet are by no means inconsiderable. He is everywhere vigorous and graphic, and improves upon his predecessor Wace alike by his additions and expansions, and by his more spirited handling of the subjects common to both. Arthur's defiance of the Danish invader Colgrim, in Sir Frederic Madden's prose version, is a good specimen of his style. Colgrim and his brother Baldulf, it must be understood, have retreated to "the hill that



A Thirteenth-Century Psalter

From Add. MS. 24,686 (in the British Museum), probably executed for Alphonso, son of Edward I., on his contemplated marriage with Margaret, daughter of Florentius, Count of Holland

standeth over Bath," after a defeat which has heaped the channel of the Avon from bank to bank with slain :—

When Arthur saw, noblest of kings, where Colgrim stood, and eke battle wrought, then called the king keenly loud : " My bold thanes, advance to the hill. For yesterday was Colgrim of men keenest, but now it is to him as to the goat,<sup>1</sup> where he guards the hill ; high upon the hill he fighteth with horns, when the wild wolf approacheth toward him. Though the wolf were alone without any herd, and there were five hundred goats, the wolf to them goeth, and all them biteth. So will I now to-day Colgrim destroy ; I am the wolf and he is the goat ; the man shall die." Yet called Arthur, noblest of kings. " Yesterday was Baldulf of all knights boldest, but now he standeth on the hill and beholdeth the Avon, how the steel fishes he in the stream. Armed with sword, their life is destroyed ; their scales float like gold-drest shields ; there float their fins, as if it were spears. There are marvellous things come to this land, such beasts on the hill, such fishes in the stream ! "

*Layamon's  
metre and  
dialect*

This is quite in the spirit of the Anglo-Saxon lay of Brunnanburh, and proves that our priest might well have been a skald if he had flourished at a fitting period, while the *Brut* might have been no unworthy pendant to the *Faery Queen* could the author have sat at the feet of Spenser. His defects are not his own, but arise from the uncouthness of his language and the want of flexibility in his metre. He seems to have striven to cure the latter, partly by the liberties which he takes with the strict rules of alliteration, partly by mingling rhyming couplets with his alliterative verse. These are inserted so capriciously that it is difficult to estimate their proportion to the whole, but the alliterative lines are by far the more numerous. Even the rhyming couplets are shown by Dr. Guest to be " founded on the models of accentuated Anglo-Saxon rhythms of four, five, six, or seven accents." Compared even with *Piers Plowman* a century and a half later, Layamon appears rhythmically lax, and as though he were feeling after some more melodious and complicated system of versification than, until Provence and Italy had shown the way, English poetry was able to attain. His metrical structure is compared by Professor Courthope to " those debased forms of architecture in which the leading external features are reproduced long after the reasons for their invention have been forgotten." Layamon's dialect is of the Southern or Wessex type, not of the Middle English, and shows how much more Teutonic our language would have been had the West-country form become dominant. It was most probably originally, and may be in the versions that have come down to us, that of North Worcestershire, where the Wessex dialect seems to have displaced the Mercian after the union of the kingdoms. The evident corruption, however, of the more recent MS. reminds us that we do not know where the older one was written, or what dialectical changes may have been introduced by the transcriber. Many words, meanings, and forms of speech are novel ; there are many Scandinavian words ; but in the two texts together not more than ninety French, though Layamon is para-

<sup>1</sup> The introduction of goats instead of sheep seems characteristically Celtic



se alle geþenkum: þeou sit  
 leouere þene in lif. 7 þis ic  
 h seuge þe co seod: þu milt  
 me wel ðene. Ierfe king ðes  
 ær hit wæter idlinge: 7 þas an  
 dædare 7er. 7 þæt se olde king  
 7th þe Gornouille seuge leone dæ  
 re. God soð beð þi mede: for þan  
 geetinge. 7 cam for þine ad  
 æde. 7 þe wælud. 7 þou me  
 leuost stope: mar þan ic on  
 lue. 7 þe wille nu dirhchred:  
 a þroe al to dælen. þm ic þe leste  
 dea: þu art mi dohter: 7 soð  
 hallen to lauerd. nu ælre best  
 7er þeo ich inu nunden: min  
 ne kume londe. 7 ælre spær þe  
 olde kinge: 7 ic hit dohter. leo  
 ne dohter regan: 7 ælre seist tu  
 me to riðe: geie þu bi fore nu  
 re digne: heo ðine ich am þe  
 anhyten. þa an swiðe mid ni  
 thalle wordan: 7 þæt ic on lue  
 mid me swa dæd: swa me ic þi  
 an lue soðe min æne hē.  
 7 þeone seide napung seð: no  
 more þenne þine lue. 7 ælre  
 re leunge. 7 þe uader ðes: þa  
 an swæde þe king: hit dohter  
 hincwæde: 7 ælre riðe ðes of  
 mine londe: 7 þi bi talie þe an  
 houte. þu soðe min leuere  
 7er þe ic ælre leowost. þa 7er uo  
 lde þe seod king: hit soðleste

ic men he lehte an me hinc bi  
 foren. hit dohter Gornouille. heo  
 lue abezunge: of soðe jar  
 7wælede. 7 þe king heo londe  
 more þanne to ðere þe oðre.  
 Gornouille ðere þa lunge. þe  
 þine ælre seiden þon kinge.  
 7 ðomhre lea fultne þine: þæt  
 heo hien wolden. 7 þe fader heo  
 wolde seuge seod: 7 þe hinc  
 were him lade. þeo seð sealde  
 king: 7 wud him fultne. 7 þæt  
 ich wille: of þe Gornouille: þu se  
 helpe apollun þu deore þe leo  
 ne in me. þa an swæde Gornouille:  
 hie 7 noðer ðe. 7 mid gom  
 ene 7 mid lehte: 7 þe fader  
 leue. þeo art me leof al to mi  
 fader: 7 ich se al to þi dohter: þe  
 halfe to þe soðleste leuere: 7  
 e bnoð æne 7 hie. 7 swa ich  
 ibide ære: 7 ich wille þe seuge ma  
 re. 7 swa minhet þu bist 7  
 7th: swa þu seiden ære. 7 swa  
 minhet swa þu haue: mege  
 7 ælre minen. for sone heo bið  
 azeð: þe mon þe hiet an. þu  
 seide þe maiden Gornouille: 7 ælre  
 ðen fultne. þu uard þe  
 king ward: 7 þe ne fæder  
 iquemed. 7 wende on ic þonke  
 7 þæt hit wæren for ulealde. 7  
 þe hie weore swa minhet:  
 þæt heo þine nold uindan. 7 ælre

Gornouille



phrasing a French original. It is probable, however, that the scholarly priest was something of a purist, and that his language is more archaic than that habitually used by him and his neighbours in daily life. The more recent of the two MSS. drops several of his words which had probably become obsolete, and is freer in the use of French terms.

The bare possibility of such a poem as Layamon's being written in English showed that the language had escaped the perils which had threatened to degrade it to a mere dialect, and that its full attainment of rank as a cultured speech could only be a question of time. It still, however, lacked a standard of form, broken up as it was into a number of dialects, capable of classification under the three leading divisions of Northern, Midland, and Southern, none of which could claim any better right than the others to be regarded as the speech of cultivated society. The character of politeness could not, indeed, belong to a tongue of which the leaders of social and political life were or might well be ignorant; but these had failed or neglected to impose their more cultivated form of speech upon the people. It is difficult to determine what the result might have been had William the Conqueror and his successors deliberately bent themselves to compel Englishmen to speak French. Most fortunately they made no such attempt, and by the period we have reached it was too late. Up to this date the English tongue had remained surprisingly unaffected by Norman influences, but the time was at hand when, without ceasing to be national, she could appropriate the verbal wealth of her competitor, and when the latter was to drift on the irresistible stream of events into the euthanasia of incorporation as a subordinate element into the language which, perhaps, it might have supplanted. For the present two great currents are discernible in the literary life of England, a purely English and a Norman. The latter expresses itself chiefly in French and Latin, but an intermediate literature springs up consisting chiefly of English paraphrases or adaptations of French romances, and occasionally of devotional works. Speaking broadly, the character of the English literature which derives from Norman sources may be described as secular, gay, bright, and even in its graver forms occupied with the things of the world; while the purely English strain of literature is for the most part austere and religious. One might be defined as pre-eminently the literature of the people, the other of the courtier and the scholar. It will be convenient to disregard strictly chronological considerations, and to carry on the history of the more purely English literature until its culmination in *Piers Plowman*; returning in a subsequent chapter to the Norman element, and following it until its fusion with the English in the fourteenth century. This will also be the place to notice the growth of the University studies which so powerfully influenced literature.

*Currents of  
English and  
of Norman  
literature*

The period from about 1210 to about 1280 was in general a barren one, partly from the foreign proclivities of the court, partly from the development of the University system and the general tendency of scholars to interest themselves in subjects which could be treated only in Latin. Somewhat

later than Layamon's *Brut* were written by different anonymous authors a metrical *Bestiary* or edifying allegories of certain animals, founded on a



Page from a *Bestiary* Book preserved in the British Museum

Latin work by an Italian archbishop named Tebaldo, and metrical paraphrases of Genesis and Exodus. All appear to have been written in East

Anglia. “The *Bestiary* contains the germ of the octo-syllabic measure,” and the most remarkable features of the Biblical paraphrases are the extent to which commentators are made use of, and the evident traces of French influence on the light brisk rhymed measures employed by the poet. Alike in dialect and metrical form, we feel ourselves approaching modern English :—

“Do wex a flod this werlde wid-hin,  
and overflonged men and deres kin  
withuten Noe and hise thre sunen,  
Sem, Cam, Japhet, if we rigt munen  
and here foure wifes woren hem with ;  
thise hadden in de arche grith.  
That arche was a feteles good,  
set and limes agen the flood ;  
thre hundred elne was it long,  
nailed and sperd, thig and strong.”

This brief extract suffices to indicate how far since the thirteenth century our language has drifted from its original Teutonic affinities. Every word presenting any difficulty, except *grith* (*peace*), can be interpreted from modern German. *Do* is *da*, *deres* is *Thier*, *munen* is *meinen*, *feteles* is *Fass*, *sperd* is *sperr*. The last occurs in *Troilus and Cressida*, “sperr up the sons of Troy.”

While these pieces were being composed in East Anglia, the legends of St. Margaret, St. Juliana, and St. Catherine, and *The Hali Meidenhed*, an alliterative homily in praise of virginity, were written in the South of England. “Their diction, with its touch of enthusiasm,” Ten Brink says, “contains much that recalls the good old times of poetry.” They are, nevertheless, inferior in interest to a prose work, **The Ancren Riwe** (Anchorites’ Rule), written in Dorsetshire in the thirteenth century : “that piece,” says Mr. Kington-Oliphant, “which, more than anything else written outside the Danelagh, has influenced our standard English.” “*The Ancren Riwe*,” he adds, “is the forerunner of a wondrous change in our speech.” It was written for three Cistercian nuns at Tarrant Keinston on the Stour, between Wimborne and Blandford, and has been plausibly attributed to Richard Poore, Bishop of Salisbury, by whom the nunnery had been founded. It is consequently in South English speech, but has a much larger proportion of French and Latin words than any previous English book ; and this is no mere peculiarity arising from the idiosyncrasy of the author, but continues to be the case throughout the thirteenth century. Not merely, as was inevitable, are foreign words introduced to express new objects and new ideas, but they come into competition with English vocables already existing, and establish themselves by their side, or oust them altogether. The influence of the Court, now habitually resident in England, no doubt counted for much, and in an even greater degree that of the preaching friars who, called into activity by those two great lights of their time, St. Francis of Assisi and St. Dominic, swarmed over England during the latter half of the thirteenth

*Amalgama-  
tion of Saxon  
and Norman*

century, and, mingling tales and worldly wisdom with their religious exhortations, fulfilled in some measure the office of a free press. Their language was necessarily more Gallicised and Latinised than that of the common people, and words employed by them easily found their way into the popular speech. In the main, however, this blending of the languages must be regarded, partly as the necessary consequence of the Anglo-Saxon element

<p>monhīre sehalīking at heyas          ⁊ gode's ppe. ⁊ u cūmel fow          āfēble mon. haldit hūnpah          hehlich ⁊ sif he haugayid heð          ⁊ aloken cape ⁊ yle ilson ⁊ unge          ancel. ⁊ lōke nōode as stan hu          hure slite him like ⁊ f nanes n          ayt hīre lare fōe barn d he līne          ⁊ flet hōma balde liche isō ha          lūmen. ⁊ ea sūch as he fōr hīs          yde ⁊ hīf lōkenelleue. Oefur          delire neheret tūp dō gode's wpe          bih yam he lade. ⁊ nuem u u m          lōm cōmeti. ⁊ haue sūnder g.          he amon aft mī hēute. he f          godd self lade bi hīf deore yurde          fahē līg ⁊ ppe cūled ut of alle.          ⁊ purhan cheyarp to ayumō          as hō yeth hīre lēte ut hīf heo          te. ⁊ fōr secer hūm seluc. ⁊ sūp he          dūde hīro heaued ⁊ deadliche          tūnef o bē labeel sūp bēde he          lāfō ⁊ he lōkōd on. ⁊ tēfūm ⁊          monslah ⁊ on hīf tēroye cūht</p>	<p>wrie hīre laud. And tūa līne          ful mon art shahardi to caste          hīn che on a sūng yūmon hīs          hīf nūstād lūmpes to yūmmen          ⁊ hāle mūche need u yepman          to yūre yel hīf chīf hīde fā yūme          nes sūhde. ⁊ sūm lēouē cūst fā          mī fūl yūlles fīd to sēonoy. neye          ne se hēr nea lūgod ah lēues hī          belaste. ⁊ hūle rīch yūnan sēooy          bote he haue sūpēal leaue of oy          re maist. fōr alle yā hīro sūmō          hīf sūpēal lāst. ⁊ al hūuē lōf dī          na hī ear sūpēal of. al cōm naye          fōr hīf tē yūmmen lōkēden cange          liche o yepmen. ah yūth hīf lān          yūhēn hām mōmnes chīf hīde          ⁊ dēden hīer yūth hō. nūhten          fāllen ī cōfūmne. Fōr hī yā fā          tēn o gode's hālf hīra labeel          pur yēit cūde hūle. ⁊ sūf an          vnhūlede hē pur. ⁊ beaht fēl hē          īn. he hīr sūhūde ⁊ sēde. hīf īf a          sūnd dēadliche yōd to yepmō ⁊</p>
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From "The Ancren Riwe" (thirteenth century)

British Museum, Cotton, MS. D. 18

having lost the faculty of framing new words, partly as the visible representation of an event of momentous importance, the reconciliation of the English and Norman peoples which may be held to date from the Great Charter of 1215. Such a reconciliation necessarily implied an amalgamation of race, and amalgamation of race implied amalgamation of language. French continued to be the language of the Law Courts until 1362, and all official documents for a long time to come were written either in French or in Latin. But when in 1258 Henry the Third found it needful to address the entire body of the people, alternative copies of his proclamation were drawn







up in English, and survive to show that, however French or Latin might have encroached upon it for the terms of foreign culture, or the expression of the more refined shades of emotion, it was still possible, and was deemed preferable, to write on the practical affairs of life in English of almost absolute purity, more archaic, indeed, than the ordinary speech. The document, which is the first English production with an exact date, might well be regarded as a type of Middle English, standing almost precisely half-way between Anglo-Saxon and our modern speech, were it not almost certain that its diction is designedly antiquated, and that the English of the period approached more nearly to the language of modern times.

*The Ancren Riwle* is a work of great literary merit, and in spite of its linguistic innovations, most of which have established themselves, well deserves to be described as "one of the most perfect models of simple eloquent prose in our language." It is quite in the spirit of the best Continental devotional works of the period, and has an unction implying a warm personal relation between the writer and the nuns for whom it was composed.

The poetry of the time principally belongs to the class of chivalric and romantic song reserved for the next chapter. There is nevertheless a remarkable exception in the *Lure Ron* (love-song) of **Thomas de Hales**, a Franciscan friar, written about the middle of the thirteenth century at the request of a nun. Its theme is the mystic union of the soul with Christ: it is, therefore, akin in spirit to *The Ancren Riwle* and similar compositions, and has been truly described as "a contemplative lyric of the simplest, noblest mould." The reflections are such as are common to all who have in all ages pleaded for the higher life under whatsoever form, and deplored the frailty and transitoriness of man's earthly estate. Two stanzas on the latter theme, as expressed in a modernised version, might almost pass for Villon's:—

"Paris and Helen, where are they,  
Fairest in beauty, bright to view?  
Amadas, Tristrem, Ideine, yea  
Isold, that lived with love so true?  
And Caesar, rich in power and sway,  
Hector the strong, with might to do?  
All glided from earth's realm away,  
Like shaft that from the bow-string flew.

It is as if they ne'er were here,  
Their wondrous woes have been a-told,  
That it is sorrow but to hear:  
How anguish killed them sevenfold,  
And how with dole their lives were drear;  
Now is their heat all turned to cold.  
Thus this world gives false hope, false fear;  
A fool, who in her strength is bold."

The political poetry which began to appear about this time, though strictly national, will be better considered along with lyrical poetry in general. Robert  
Mannyn

Robert of Gloucester also belongs to the next section, and we find little to detain us until we arrive at the religious prose of the fourteenth century.

oute more: uon to zeche loue. Ine zuphe made god pofft ouf hy poffet  
 clenke: uon pe loue pet he help to oufstand uon to gaden oure heften.  
 And oure loue. And uon wile fole. Jmetliche hi biþe. i deped i effes.  
**A** chueuore hi biþe i deped i effe of pe || Ine uore hi biþe i de-  
 hoip gof. þame poffe of pe uaderland of pe | ped poffe of pe holy gof.  
 zome: uon alle hie dedesland hiþe poffet biþe comen. pet to biþe uupie se-  
 les. pe one: uon þam pet afe lokes of myte lyeþ a pped to pe uader. And pe  
 lokes of biþe dmi to pe zone: alþis pe lokes of guodnesse. to pe holy gof.  
 In guodnes if afe zupst stant dmi to lece him zehue. uon. i of am an poff  
 pet hi nigt ne coftneþ: pet ne if a nigt gē guodnesse. In uon pe holy gof be þi-  
 pe zone poffet fpet him zehue in oure heften. Ine uore paul afe be zone  
 fpetnes. pe uore hi biþe Jmetliche deped poffet of pe holy gof. So be if pe  
 welle. hi biþe pe fpetnes. And pe oþer fole if uon. pet pe holy gof is Jmet. pe  
 be loue. pet is be tuore pe uaderland pe zone. And pe uore pet loue if pe  
 ipe. And pe uore. And pe hefte poffet. pet man mō ipe. pet afe poff.  
 And in eþe poffe. Ine poff. alle pe oþre. And hi louta fpeten. non oþer poffe  
 ne if nigt afe poffe. ne uore if afe pet holy gof. Jmetliche poffe. And

From the "Ayenbite of Inwyt" (A. D. 1340)

British Museum, Arundel MS 57

The *Ayenbite of Inwit* (remorse of conscience), although a translation from the French, demands inclusion in the specifically English department of our literature as a unique and invaluable specimen of the Kentish dialect.

The translator, a monk at Canterbury, has considerably dated his work on the festival of SS. Simon and Jude, 1341. Much more important is the *Handlyng Synne*, a translation from the French of William de Wadington, by Robert Mannyng, of Bourne, in Lincolnshire, whence he is frequently called **Robert de Brunne**. He was a brother of the Gilbertine Order, and flourished under all the three Edwards. Mannyng was a man of much independence of mind, and is very free in his treatment of his original. He writes in short metre; his work may be described in general as a collection of stories illustrating the offences which may be committed under the sway of each of the seven deadly sins, and is valuable as a picture of the manners of the time, although, of course, the chief merit in this respect belongs to the original writer. Philologically, the English version is of great interest. "Since Ormin," says Mr. Kington-Oliphant, "no Englishman has shown the change in our own tongue so strikingly as Robert of Brunne. Many of our writers had fastened an English ending to a foreign root; but no Englishman had fastened a French ending to an English root, as *bondage*; and none had employed a French active participle instead of an English preposition, as "*passing* all things. In his seventy lines on Confirmation he employs French words for at least one third of his nouns, verbs and adverbs; the same proportion that was afterwards to be used in the collects of the English Prayer-book, as also by Addison." We shall speak hereafter of

Of abraham and of isac  
 yat lath were for omen make  
 Synthen sal i tell yow  
 Of iacob and of esau  
 varneist sal be synthen tald  
 how y<sup>r</sup> ioseph was boght and sold  
 O ye jhus and moyses  
 yat goddis folk to lede in ches  
 how god bigan ye lath hir grise  
 ye quilk ye jhus in sald lise  
 Isau ve luring and o dau  
 how y<sup>r</sup> he fught a gam gola  
 Synthen o salamon y<sup>r</sup> wis  
 how craftlik he did nistis  
 how mit com thoro pphci  
 how he com his folk to by  
 and hit sal be reddynn yanne  
 O joachim and of saut carme  
 O mar alo hir doght mild  
 how sto was torn and bare a child  
 how he was born and que and ware  
 how sto in to ye temple bar  
 O ye kyng y<sup>r</sup> him soght  
 yat the p<sup>r</sup>clandes til in brought  
 how y<sup>r</sup> herode kyng for wogh  
 for cast lath ye child slogh  
 how ye child to egypt fled  
 and how y<sup>r</sup> he was theyen ledd  
 yat sal to find salym dedis  
 y<sup>r</sup> hit did in hys barn hedir  
 Synthen o ye baptist johan  
 y<sup>r</sup> jhu baptist hit jordan  
 how hit quen he lang had fast  
 was fondid w<sup>r</sup> ye sek gat  
 Synthen o jons baptisynge  
 and how jhu he did herode kyng  
 how y<sup>r</sup> him cast him selue  
 ches til him apstels tuelue  
 and openlik bigan to pche  
 and all y<sup>r</sup> sek ware to lache  
 and did ye merades in a nyf  
 y<sup>r</sup> ye jhus him hild in trayf  
 Synthen how y<sup>r</sup> haly daghtun  
 turned wat in to syn  
 O fine tholland men y<sup>r</sup> he  
 fedd w<sup>r</sup> fine laues and fises dre

From the MS. of "Cursor Mundi"

British Museum, Vespasian, A. 3

Mannyng as a metrical historian. His popularity must have helped to bring the East Midland dialect into general literary use.

"*Cursor  
Mundi*"

About 1320, while Mannyng was yet writing, appeared the *Cursor Mundi* (*Cursor o World*) a metrical paraphrase of Scripture history intermingled with numerous ecclesiastical legends. It is an extensive work on a comprehensive plan. The anonymous author, a man of an ascetic cast of mind, desired to set up a rival to the secular poetry of his time, and devoted himself to the celebration of the Virgin Mary, who, though not prominent in the poem, is represented as the mainspring of the economy of redemption; much in the same way as Elizabeth pervades the *Faery Queen* as the unseen yet ever-present Gloriana. The work possesses considerable poetical merit, and attained great popularity. The original dialect is Northumbrian, but the poem, though consisting of no less than 25,000 lines, was transcribed with modifications in other parts of England, and appears to have exerted considerable influence upon Wycliffe and upon Langland.

*Life and  
works of  
Richard Rolle*

Perhaps the most popular author of his day was **Richard Rolle**, better known from the place of his abode as **Richard de Hampole**, but in his case literary merit was reinforced by the repute of sanctity. He was born about 1290 at Thornton, in Yorkshire, and while pursuing a successful career as a student at Oxford, came under religious impressions which induced him, at the age of nineteen, to retire into a hermitage in a wood near his father's house. Fearing to be placed under restraint, he became an itinerant preacher, and discoursed with such effect at Dalton, near Rotherham, that the squire of the place established him in a retreat, where he remained for some years absorbed in religious contemplation. After another period of wandering he settled at Hampole, near Doncaster, where his cell became a place of resort for the devout. He died in 1349 in the odour of sanctity, but was never canonised, perhaps on account of the popularity of his writings among the Lollards. He wrote much both in Latin and English, and preceded Wycliffe as a translator or rather paraphraser of several portions of Scripture, of which only his version of the Psalms and Canticles have yet been printed. The two most considerable of his Latin treatises, *De Emendatione Vitae* and *De Incendio Amoris*, were translated into English by Richard Misyn in 1434 and 1435. The most important of his English works, *The Pricke of Conscience*, is in rhyme, and extends to seven books. It is entirely ascetic in character, a perfect representation of the mediæval view of life as beheld from the cloister, free from every symptom of the approaching renaissance except for the author's acquaintance with many classical writers, but is highly important in a philological point of view from the insight which it affords into the character of our language in the early fourteenth century, by the comparison of the original Northumbrian of the Yorkshire hermit with the Southern English dialects into which it has been transmuted by copyists.

Rolle was certainly a most remarkable man, and as an author fills the

most conspicuous place between Layamon and Langland. He performed nearly the same mission as, centuries later, Bunyan and Wesley were to discharge in quickening the spiritual life of their times: and though he wanted the creative genius of the former and the administrative genius of the latter, his verse is much better than Bunyan's and his prose has a delicate aroma lacking in Wesley's. The verse, though seldom true poetry, is admirable for its homely energy, but, terse as the expression may be, the nature of the subject renders it discursive, and we shall do him more justice by citing his prose in a modernised form. He is, rather by parable than by argument, combating the notion so acceptable to lazy devotees, that good works, involving disturbance of the contemplative mood and contact with the world, are an absolute hindrance to the spiritual life:—

*Rolle's character as an author*

“It fares thereby as if thou hadst a little coal and thou would'st make a fire therewith. Thou would'st put sticks and over them the coal, and if it seemed for a time that thou should'st quench the coal with the sticks, nevertheless when thou hast abidden awhile blow a little, anon springs up a great flame of fire, for the sticks are turned to fire. Right so spiritually; thy will and thy desire that thou hast to God is, as it were, a little coal of fire in thy soul, for it gives to thee somewhat of ghostly heat and ghostly light, but it is full little; for often it waxes cold and turns to fleshly lust, and sometimes into idleness. Therefore it is good that thou put these sticks, that is good works of active life. And if it so be that these sticks, as it seems, for a time hinder thy desire that it may not be so pure nor so fervent as thou would'st, be not too cast down therefore, but abide and suffer awhile, and so blow at the fire; that is, first do thy works and then go alone to thy prayers and thy meditations, and lift up thy heart to God and pray Him of His goodness that He will accept the works that thou doest to His pleasure. Hold thou these as nothing in thine own sight, but only at the mercy of Him. Acknowledge much thy wretchedness and thy frailty, and offer all thy good deeds soothfastly to Him inasmuch as they are good, and inasmuch as they are bad put them down to thyself. And for this meekness shall all thy deeds turn into flame of fire as sticks laid upon the coal.”

It is clear that English prose in the middle of the fourteenth century, even in the mouth of a Northumbrian, had become capable of tenderness, force, and true eloquence. Rolle's genius was not equally turned to poetry, and we shall impart a more adequate notion of the powers of English speech in this department by citing an anonymous Northumbrian, who about 1330 composed the metrical sermons and tales edited by Mr. Small (*English Metrical Homilies*, 1862). This bard is peculiarly eminent for the rapidity and clearness of his narrative, which cannot be fully exhibited in a short extract. We therefore give the moral he appends to the edifying history of the usurer who, by advice of the bishop, suffers himself for his soul's health to be devoured by the reptiles miraculously engendered amid the grain which he has withheld from the poor:—

"This tale haf I now told here  
 To ger you se in quat manere  
 That the mare catel that man have  
 The mare and mare his hert doth crave  
 And mainly this akerers<sup>1</sup>  
 That are cursed for thair aferes  
 Bot yet thair here thair life amend  
 Thair wend til wormes witouten end  
 Thair sel them reuli rif and rend  
 In helle pine witouten end.  
 That wist this biscop witerlye,  
 And further did he quaintelye  
 Quen he gert wurmes etc this man  
 To yem his sawle fra Satan  
 For wormes suld his sawle have rended  
 Quas sa-ever it suld haf lended  
 Yf he no havid wel ben scriven,  
 And his caron til wormes given.  
 Bot for his fless was pined here,  
 His sawl is now to Godd ful dere,  
 Thair it wones in plai and gamen,  
 Godd bring us thider alle samen!"

*Dialectical  
peculiarities*

Compositions like these are especially valuable in determining the condition of the spoken, as well as the written, language, since, being evidently even more designed to be recited to the illiterate than perused by the instructed, they can contain no words not in common use, and must faithfully represent the dialectical peculiarities of the district where they were written or copied. The affinity of the Northumbrian verses just quoted to the Lowland Scotch must have struck every reader. *Ger*, for instance (Scotch *gar—make*) never found admission into the speech of the South. The French *caroigne* (*carrion*) did gain entrance, and must have been universally understood. In the passage cited from Rolle, who wrote for educated readers, the Saxon stem is grafted with such foreign blooms as *circumstance*, *frailty*, *fervent*, *pleasance*.

*Transition  
from the  
thirteenth to  
the fourteenth  
century*

In the opinion of so distinguished an historian as Bishop Stubbs the world underwent a change for the worse at the beginning of the fourteenth century, which he sums up thus: "We pass from an age of heroism to an age of chivalry." Robert Bruce and the Black Prince scarcely seem less entitled to the praise of heroism than Simon de Montfort; and although it is true that the enterprises of the thirteenth century were more commonly than those of the fourteenth undertaken from idealised motives, the great disinterested crime of the crusade against the Albigenses was even more atrocious than the great selfish crime of the suppression of the Templars. But if the men were not individually worse, the general tendencies of the times inevitably brought about conditions, both moral and material, inciting good men to complaint and protest, and hence favourable to the growth of objurgatory and satiric poetry. It was in the nature of things that the system of chivalry which had developed in the dark ages should progress to a culminating point

<sup>1</sup> Usurers. German, *Wucherer*.

of splendour, but this involved costly ostentation and continual war, bringing along with them poverty and famine, and the systematic employment of hired mercenaries. It was equally inevitable that the enthusiasm which had created the religious orders of the preceding age should decay, and that the apostles of the thirteenth century should become the impostors of the fourteenth. The "Babylonish captivity" of the Church at Avignon augmented its corruptions and dimmed its halo of sanctity; while the unforeseen, and in



"Treuthe's Pilgryme atte Plow"

*From MS. R. 3. 14. Trinity College, Cambridge*

the then state of medical and sanitary knowledge, irresistible calamity of the Black Death, four times a visitor to England, by the havoc which it made among the labouring population, profoundly modified the existing social relations, and begot a spirit of discontent and revolt. Here were materials for a great satiric poet, and England found one in **William Langland**, the author of *Piers Plowman*. Yet as this Janus age had another and far different face; its gay and gallant aspects, its good-humour and genial enjoyment of life, the sumptuousness of its apparel, and the picturesqueness of its manners, were to be represented by another and a greater poet, the English

Boccaccio; as the seer of *Piers Plowman*, notwithstanding the enormous disparity of genius, may be styled the English Dante. Chaucer will need a chapter to himself. Langland may be fitly introduced here as the consummation of that strictly national style of poetry to which our attention has hitherto been mainly confined, and which, having been carried by him to the utmost height of which it was capable, is about to yield to a more perfect form of art, as Ennius and Lucilius of old gave place to Virgil and Horace.

*Langland's  
"Piers Plow-  
man"*

The poem of *Piers Plowman* was widely popular from the first, but the author is named by no contemporary, and few circumstances of his life are positively known. It is, nevertheless, not difficult to form a fair picture of the man from the internal evidence of his work. He represents himself as beholding his vision on Malvern Hill, and there is no reason to distrust Bishop Bale's statement that he was born at Cleobury Mortimer, on the border of the adjacent county of Shropshire, though this is nearly three times as far from Malvern as the eight miles stated by Bale. It is within a few miles of Areley, where, more than a century before, Layamon had dwelt and sung. Langland's Shropshire or Worcestershire birth is also confirmed by the evidence of his West Midland dialect. From his own statement respecting the age he had attained about 1377, he would seem to have been born in 1332. He represents himself as having received a good education, but as having in some measure neglected his opportunities. His works, nevertheless, evince acquaintance with many Latin and French authors. He had taken minor orders, which did not disable him from marrying. The reason why he advanced no farther in the ecclesiastical hierarchy may well be that he was already married when ordained: he certainly had a legitimate wife and daughter by 1362. He was consequently unable to hold a benefice, and his principal vocation would be to participate in occasional services, especially masses for the dead. He speaks of himself as supported by Pater-noster, Primer, and Psalter; and as dropping in from time to time "now at some gentleman's house, now at some lady's," "begging without bag or bottle," "roaming about, robed in russet." His life seems to have been chiefly spent in London, with many of whose streets and quarters he exhibits a close acquaintance. He had ample means of becoming intimate with all orders of society, and his mysticism is tempered by a wide knowledge of the world.

*Character of  
Langland*

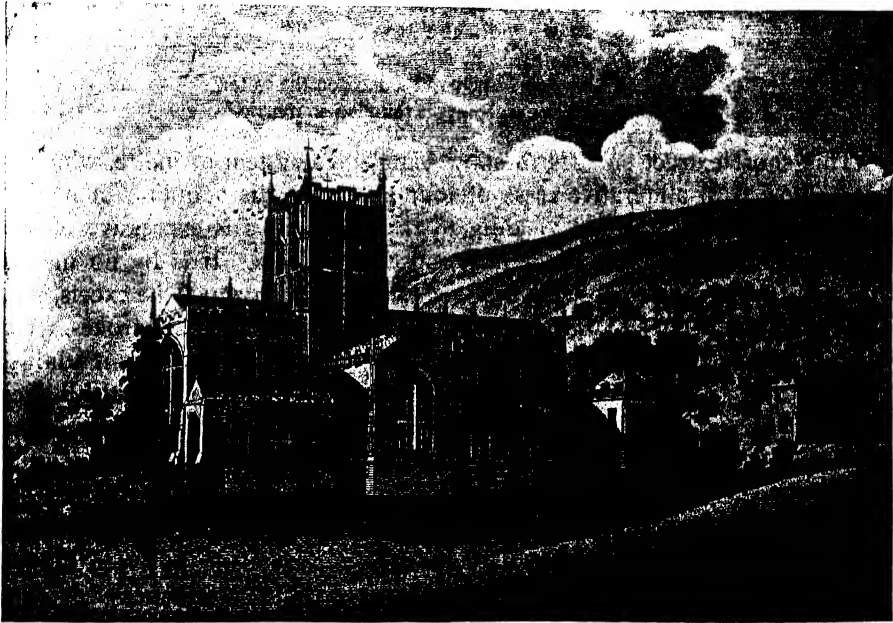
The character assumed by Langland is that of the prophet, denouncing the sins of society and encouraging men to aspire to a higher life. He is perhaps the first English writer to appear formally in this capacity, and it might be difficult to find another by whom it has been supported with less of occasional unreason and fanaticism. He could never have rivalled the eloquence of a Carlyle or a Ruskin, even had the language in which he wrote been at as advanced a stage as theirs. But he is more constructive than the former, and more consistent than the latter. On the other hand, he has few deep or surprising gleams of insight. He is a conservative reformer, who would rather preserve by amendment than destroy to rebuild. He takes a keen interest in the politics of his day, and usually



**A** a somer seƿon abhan softe was þe soone  
 I schap me in to schabbesais i a scheperde weye  
 in an abut of an eyntre euu holi of weybes  
 þere i fory in þe worlde aboudies to here  
**C** falls mani selles and selcoupe pynges  
 an in a nati mozelking on malicne bulles  
 we bi ful to slepe for weyþness of walþing  
**I**n a launde as i bar i leuise a down and slepte  
 aneuilous li i mette as i schal zolli telle  
 of al þe welpe of þe worlde and þe wo boye  
 Al si sleping as i schal zolli schelþe  
**A**bsubing as bit weye and biting i þe hit  
 of treupe and of tedecheþeþe son and gile  
**C**alkand i lobed after þe sonne  
 i falls a touy as i tolbes cheupe was þe mine  
 lreþibays i bihuls in a while aftur  
 and falls a deap dale. Sey as ilene  
 throuse in pat þroues and libbesse spuytes  
**A**fan feld ful of folc found i þe bi ribene  
 of al maney of men þe mene and þe yche  
 worching and wauid þing as þe worlde as þe  
**S**umme putten hem to plow and pleuden ful felse  
 in setting and in solþing skouke ful hayde  
 and boumen pat pris wastres abip glotemye seþþen  
**S**umme putten hem to priðe and a peiler hem þe after  
 in couteuance of cloping in man þynues gise  
**I**n penaunce and preies putten hem nange  
 for þe lone of ouye lord luresen ful hayde  
 in hope to haue god ense and heuenerche blisse  
 as anderes and cnyghtes pat holden hem in selles  
 þe couenten nouyt in ciuities to daren a bouite  
 for no liberes lif lose þe oþe libaue to plesen  
**A**nd summe chosen chaffay and prenesen þe betteþe  
 as hit semer in ouye schap pat sliche men schulde  
**A**nd summe meyes to make as munyales kinne  
 bulley nouyt skynke ne sliche bote sliche giete oþe  
 þe spuesen up fantasious and foles hem makyþ  
 and han wyl at wille to worchen if þe wille  
 and pat pouil prechep of hem preuen bit i nyte  
**I**n loquity tynplogm is wastres kinne  
 Disseyes and begges faste a bouite zede



sides with the Commons in their disputes with the Crown. He is always patriotic, and, as M. Jusserand says, insular; he would maintain the old distinctions of classes and fix wages by the authority of the State; he detests Lombards as Queen Anne's country gentlemen detested the moneyed interest. Stringent and fiery in reproof as he is, he is yet tender to penitent transgressors. His liberality of nature is shown by his kindly mention of the Jew. Honest, healthy, homely, he is an Englishman of the best type, a precursor and practically an ally of Wycliffe, dealing with the ethical side of current beliefs and customs as Wycliffe dealt with the theological. His Protestantism is undeveloped, he preserves considerable



**Malvern Church**

*From Blore's "History of Worcestershire"*

respect for the Chair of Peter, but his tendencies are entirely anti-sacerdotal. He bitterly denounces the worldliness of the Papacy, the greed of the legates the luxury of the clergy, and the traffic in relics and indulgences, and plainly foretells the downfall of the religious houses :

"And now [he says] is religion a rider, a roamer by streets,  
A leader of lovedayes and a land-buyer,  
A priker on a palfrey from manor to manor,  
A hep of houndes at his ers, as he a lord were,  
And but his knave knele, that shall his cuppe bring,  
He lowreth on hym, and asketh hym who taught hym curtesie."

Langland represents the dissatisfaction of the lower and the more thinking classes of English society as Chaucer represents the content of the aristocracy and the prosperous middle class. Each is in a manner the comple-

ment of the other. It is significant that Langland is cited as an authority by John Ball, the leader of the great revolution of the peasantry in 1381.

When this quotation was made, *Piers Plowman* had existed in its original recension for nineteen years, since this alludes to events of the year 1362, and to none of later date. Langland was thus about thirty when the vision befell him upon Malvern Hill :

"In a summer season, when soft was the sun,  
I shop me into a shroud, a sheep as I were ;  
In habit of an hermit unholy of works,  
Wended I wyden in this world, wonders to hea  
But in a May morning on Malvern hills,  
Me befel a ferley, a feyrie methought ;  
I was weary of wandringe and went me to rest  
Under a broad bank by a bourne side,  
And as I lay and leaned and looked on the water,  
I slumbered in a sleeping, it sounded so murrie."

*Metre and  
diction of  
"Piers Plow-  
man"*

This short extract suffices to show Langland's system of metre, which is the Anglo-Saxon alliterative verse of four accents. His adoption of it at a time when it was generally yielding to rhymed metres is expressive of the sturdily English character of the man and of the poem. It is by no means unsuited to his talent, favouring the pregnant brevity in which he excels, and enabling him to depict persons and qualities by swift forcible strokes. He has probably extracted as much sonority and modulation from it as it admits, and thus performed the negative service of showing its unfitness for the higher grades of poetry. The need for several accentuated words in the same line adapted it to a monosyllabic language, and it became more difficult to handle in proportion as long words came into use. Langland's diction also is instructive, as showing the progress effected towards a recognised standard of literary speech. Though using a West Midland dialect, he is much nearer modern English than his predecessor Layamon. He is sometimes free in the employment of French and Latin words.

*Conduct of  
the poem*

At the beginning the poet has a vision of a castle upon a hill and a dungeon below, the intermediate space occupied by a crowd of people engaged in various occupations, generally of an unsanctified nature. Holy Church descends and informs the dreamer that the castle is Truth and the dungeon the dwelling of Falsehood. She gives him much wholesome admonition, and he mingles with the throngs of actual persons and allegorical abstractions. If Langland's terseness and pungency often remind us of Dante, his taste for allegory not unfrequently suggests the second part of *Faust*. "Meed," which may perhaps be defined as self-interest, Conscience, Reason, Truth, Kynde (Nature), the seven deadly sins, all play their parts. The scene changes to Westminster, and the king comes on the stage. He proposes that Meed should reform and espouse Conscience; she is willing, but Conscience refuses, and Reason is called in to settle the dispute between them. Meed is condemned, but ere a decisive conclusion is reached the dreamer finds himself occupied with another vision and listening to the confessions of the Seven Deadly



Sins addressed to Reason. At length *Piers Plowman* himself appears, not, as some have thought, the author himself, but a mystic figure, representing the ideal of conduct, and seeming gradually to assume the semblance of the Saviour. This is particularly apparent in the latter and more recent part of the poem, a series of visions intermixed with homilies, written from time to time as questions, secular or spiritual, forced themselves upon the poet. Universal love, good works, and the discouragement of earthly pride and spiritual imposture, are the burden of the whole, and the poem may be regarded as a commentary upon the aspects of the age as they presented themselves to a pious and high-minded man, a thorough Englishman in blood and intellect, and entirely unaffected by the Renaissance influences which were moulding men abroad. *Piers Plowman* showed that England could go high within her own limits, but also showed that much more was needed ere her literature could become important beyond them.

Most of the poem was rewritten. The principal additions are the cantos entitled *Do-well*, *Do-better*, and *Do-best*. These are more mystical and allegorical than the commencement, and the poet's thought is often hard to follow. At the conclusion he awakes, leaving the castle of Unity erected by *Piers Plowman* besieged by Antichrist, and in imminent jeopardy. If this alludes to the Great Schism it is later than 1378. The alterations and additions seem to have been published about this date, and again about 1393. If, as is probable, Langland is the author of the unfinished poem which Professor Skeat has entitled *Richard the Redeless* (ill advised), he had returned to the West of England, for this piece appears to have been written at Bristol, which perhaps accounts for the number of nautical terms it contains. In it the poet, who had already admonished the wilful and erring Richard the Second, returns to the task, and seems to have found that it was too late, for the poem breaks off abruptly. Richard's deposition took place in September 1399, and it is not probable that Langland long survived it.

We have characterised the author of *Piers Plowman* as a satiric poet, and such he essentially is, although he is also much more. He has decided views on political and social questions; the feudal system is his ideal; he desires no change in the institutions of his days, and thinks that all would be well if the different orders of society would but do their duty. The ecclesiastics and the peasants are the worst offenders; the former by luxury and greed, the latter by indolence. Like Dante and Bunyan, he ennobles his satire by arraying it in a garb of allegory, and his resemblance to the latter, who can hardly have read him, is sometimes startling. Langland's inferiority is chiefly in his inability to realise abstractions; he must see a thing before he paints it, and his vision is not that of the inner eye. His imagery is rustic and homely: the blood of Christ is mortar, the Church a roof, Christianity a cart. But, writing of what is familiar to him, he is intensely real. His vigour and incisiveness when he depicts what he has actually got before him may be illustrated by his delineation of

Envy, quoted with some curtailment from Miss Warren's admirable prose rendering :—

"He was as pale as a pellet (stone bullet) and seemed in the palsy; and like a leek which has lain long in the sun, so he looked with his hollow cheeks and evil scowl. His body was well-nigh swollen to bursting for anger, so that he bit his lips and went along clenching his fist, and thought to avenge himself in deeds or in words when he saw his time."

[Envy, nevertheless, is sick of himself, and would repent if he knew how. After owning that he would rather hear of the misfortune of a neighbour than be himself enriched by "a wey of cheese," he proceeds]

"When I come to the church, and should kneel to the Rood, and pray for the people as the priest teaches, then I ask on my knees that Christ would give them sorrow who bore away my bowl and tattered sheet. I turn my eye from the altar and see how Ellen has a new coat, and then I wish it were mine, and all it came from. And thus I live loveless like an evil dog, and all my body swelleth for the bitterness of my gall. I have not eaten as a man ought for many years, for envy and an evil will are hard to digest. Can no sugar nor sweet thing assuage my swelling? nor diappendion (emollient) drive it from my heart, nor neither shrift nor shame, except one scrape my maw?"

"Yes," readily said Repentance, and counselled him for the best. "Sorrow for sins is the salvation of souls."

This is emphatically Piers Plowman's message, and his delivery of it is perhaps the first conspicuous instance in our history of Literature taking upon herself what had hitherto been the especial office of the Church.

*The Creed of Piers Plowman*, generally printed with *The Vision*, is an imitation, which Professor Skeat has shown to be by the author of *The Plowman's Tale*, erroneously attributed to Chaucer. The writer is a follower of Wycliffe, and has much of his poetical model's spirit and graphic power. He represents himself as going from one order of friars to another in quest of the peace that passeth understanding, until, disgusted by their luxury and crediting all the aspersions which they cast upon each other, he at last betakes himself to the light yoke and easy burden of the Saviour.

*"Piers Plowman's Creed"*

## CHAPTER IV

### ANGLO-NORMAN LITERATURE, ROMANCE, BALLAD, AND HISTORY

WE have in the last chapter traced the course of English literature from the period when, already from various causes in a languishing condition, it seemed all but annihilated by the catastrophe of foreign conquest, until the period of revival in the fourteenth century. At the time at which we have arrived it stands upon the verge of a renaissance as unforeseen as its fall ; partly due to alliance with the other literature which had for a time threatened to overwhelm it, partly to that general awakening of the mind of Europe in which all the principal nations were beginning to participate.

Two characteristics of native English literature will have been remarked, its limited range and its general seriousness. One exceptional man, Layamon, has made an attempt to transplant the epic into English, but his example has hardly found an imitator. One or two metrical histories, and a faint dawn of lyrical poetry, remain to be noticed, but these will hardly affect the general impression that the intellectual interests of the Saxon mind of the period were mainly connected with religion. Nor is this interest inspired by theological or philosophical research ; it is almost entirely confined to religion in its practical aspects. It must have seemed, up to the middle of the fourteenth century, as if English literature, so far as it was Saxon, might dwindle to the level of the most diminutive European literatures of our day—Breton, Basque, Romansch—and consist mainly of catechisms and manuals of devotion. Yet, as has been shown by extracts from Richard Rolle, the language had by the fourteenth century become capable of real eloquence in prose. The limitations of its literature were mainly to be ascribed to the paralysis of the national spirit by subjugation to the foreigner, which necessarily ceased when the foreigner himself had become absorbed into the Englishman. Awakening from its slumber, English literature, like Adam, found a companion by its side.

*Anglo-Norman  
literature*

In the time of Edward the Confessor the Normans already possessed a literature derived from France, scarcely indeed extending beyond the domain of narrative poetry, yet active and progressive, while that of England lay sunk in torpor. Transplantation to England modified this literature in but one respect, the infusion of romantic feeling which it received from a closer contact with the sources of Celtic tradition, hitherto only accessible in Brittany. Otherwise



the Norman poets and chroniclers continued to write as they would have written in Normandy, and owed as little to the Anglo-Saxons as these owed to them. The contrast between the two literatures is striking: the Anglo-Saxon, rustic, serious, homely, chiefly concerning itself with the next world; the Norman gay, gallant, secular, the minister and darling of a brilliant court. The same character of superior urbanity and polish applies equally to the Norman divines and the Norman historians, though this is less superficially apparent on account of their having mostly written in Latin. Everywhere, however, the Norman appears as pre-eminently the aristocratic literature, the instruction or the amusement of the classes distinguished by nobility of birth or superiority of education, while the Saxon creeps on in obscurity, the "treasure of the humble." That it should nevertheless become in process of time the dominant element, and absorb its rival, was a necessary consequence of the political conditions of the times, which happily favoured the peaceful amalgamation of the nations and the languages. The absolute extrusion of either element by the other would have been greatly to be deplored; and, taking a wide view, it must be allowed to have been far more for the interest of humanity that a language like modern English should arise, uniting the best elements of Romance and of Teutonic speech, than that either the Romanic or the Teutonic family should be augmented by yet another dialect. The part assigned to each of the amalgamating idioms corresponded to that filled by each respectively during the period of their estrangement. To the Norman, gay and courtly words expressive of luxury and refinement, and those concerned with the more subtle operations of the intellect: to the Saxon, familiar terms, names of ordinary objects, article, pronoun, particle, whatever knits and binds a language. Nor must the great indirect influence of easier access to Latin be overlooked. Hitherto, except as regarded ecclesiastical terms, Latin had not been an important factor in the formation of English, but now Latin words began to enter freely without the ordeal of an intermediate stage of French.

These observations relate principally to the condition of the English language and literature about the middle of the fourteenth century, when, in Juvenal's phrase, the Orontes was beginning to flow into the Tiber. A great experiment was about to be tried. The Saxon speech by itself was clearly inadequate to the needs of the now united and fast expanding nation; but without a healthy national instinct there was great danger lest the national speech should degenerate into a formless jargon. We have seen how Langland dealt with it, and seen that his treatment was unsatisfactory, inasmuch as he adhered too strictly to the old vocabulary and old metrical forms. We shall see the course adopted by the other great writers who fortunately arose about this time. Before, however, coming to Chaucer, Gower, Wycliffe, and Mandeville, it will be convenient to investigate the Norman element now about to be incorporated with English, alike in its own history and in the character of the English writers, principally poets, who had arisen under its influence; and also with reference to the influence of Norman ideas and institutions in moulding the English mind.

*Early French  
poetry*

It appears at first sight an anomaly that the Latinised nations of the Middle Ages, superior to the Germanic in civilisation, should have been more tardy in developing national literatures. Even if we dated the beginning of English literature as low as Caedmon, which would be too large a concession, it would have existed for more than three centuries before anything deserving the appellation of a vernacular literature existed in France. The cause was the dependence of literature upon language, and the degree in which the formation of a vernacular adequate for literary purposes was retarded by the taint of barbarism which clung to it, and by the position of Latin as the accepted medium of law, learning, government, and worship. To the Anglo-Saxon Latin was a language indispensable indeed for many purposes, but diverse from his own; to the Frenchman it was a tongue to which he owed allegiance, and of which his ordinary speech was a debased and barbarous dialect. There is sufficient proof of the existence of a language which may be called French in the early part of the ninth century, but save for ballads, whose existence is rather a matter of inference than of knowledge, there is no evidence of its employment for literary purposes until early in the eleventh. Its beginnings precisely corresponded with the initial stages of Anglo-Saxon literature. Poetry was for long the only description of literature attempted; the authors were minstrels, or, when this was not the case, the *jongleur* disseminated the work of the *trouvère*; the exploits of heroes were their themes, and their public was one of nobles and warriors. In its original shape French literature was an accumulation of the *chansons de geste*, probably founded upon a pre-existing literature—but produced so copiously during the eleventh and twelfth centuries that the number of lines extant even now has been estimated at between two and three millions. As the name implies, these were ballad epics. They were composed in what are now called Alexandrine lines of ten or twelve syllables, three syllables to a foot, after this pattern:

Seigneurs, or faites silence ; s'il vous plait, escoutez,

arranged in *tirades*, or sets of assonant verses repeating the same merely vowel rhyme till the poet was tired of it, or it of him. This latter circumstance need not soon occur, since, if we may have recourse to the English tongue for the sake of illustration, *doll* would be a permissible rhyme to *dog*.

There is no good reason to suppose that these *chansons* originated in Provence, although the Provençal poets afterwards greatly expanded the range of poetry, and did much to refine and embellish metrical forms. But these ballad epics had their birth in the north and east of France, and the Normans, if not the original inventors, speedily became familiarised with them. The themes to which they were originally for the most part confined illustrate the working of the human mind in all ages, and reflect light on a still more interesting literary episode, the origin of the Homeric poems. One great figure, Charlemagne, filled the popular imagination, and appears in the *chansons* as the centre of a group of paladins, historical, perhaps, as regards the existence of some of them, but imaginary as concerns the exploits attributed to them. It being easier to take

*Carlovingian  
cycle of  
romance*

From a Fragment of a Fifteenth-Century Translation of the "Chanson de Roland"

liberties with such children of the imagination than with an authentic and imposing figure like Charlemagne, the latter out of mere dignity gradually retires into the background, and Roland and Renaud take his place, as Achilles and Ulysses long ago took Agamemnon's. What the Trojan War was to ancient Greece, the strife with barbarous invaders was to Europe from the ninth to the eleventh century. By far the finest example of the *chansons de geste* is the *Chanson de Roland*, not the same as that sung at Hastings by the minstrel Taillefer, but produced, most probably, by a Norman minstrel in England, before the end of the century, and attributed in the only extant MS. to a poet named Tuoldus, if this be not rather the name of the transcriber. The relation of these spirited but artless performances to the elaborate Italian epics on the Charlemagne cycle is probably much the same as that of the lost ballad poetry of ancient Greece to the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. The influence of the *Chanson de Roland* and other poems in which Charlemagne was represented as in conflict with the Saracens must have been an important factor in the state of feeling which produced the Crusades, and is concentrated in the history attributed with pious faith to Archbishop Turpin, a forgery of the eleventh century. It is a singular instance of romantic misrepresentation that, although Roland's expedition to Spain and death are historical, he was in reality not cut off by the Paynim, but by Christian Basques.

Arthurian  
cycle

The Carolingian *chanson de geste* produced little impression upon English literature, being within a century after the Conquest superseded even in France by another cycle of romance more attractive to the inhabitants of Britain. When the mine of Carolingian tradition became exhausted the Norman minstrels, about 1160, turned to the story of Arthur, which they learned sometimes from tradition preserved among the Bretons, sometimes perhaps from the chronicles of Nennius, or from their own actual contact with the Welsh. In any case the Arthurian legend supplied their poets with a rich variety of subjects, and Englishmen, forgetting the actual circumstances of the struggle between Saxon and Celt in Arthur's days, were willing to accept him as a national hero. A common ground was thus created upon which Norman and Saxon could meet, and as the treatment which suited Arthurian themes was soon found to be appropriate to situations of similar character, a school of metrical romance arose, which partly by direct translation, partly by imitation, enriched English literature with many compositions of importance. The French poems upon which these were based cannot, of course, be claimed for English literature; yet, although the most distinguished writer of them, Chrétien de Troyes, was a Frenchman in every respect, there is reason to believe that most of their authors were Anglo-Norman. For a survey of the Arthurian romance as a whole the reader will be best referred to the digest of it in the great prose epic of Sir Thomas Malory in the fifteenth century; but the principal metrical romances, whether actually English or merely English in so far as they influenced English feeling, may well be treated in this place. Whether from Celtic influence, or for some other reason, they exhibit a decided advance upon the manners and feelings depicted in the

*chansons de geste*, and ultimately attain the ideal of chivalry as understood in the days of the Black Prince. This implies the recognition of love, an element almost entirely absent from the *chansons de geste*, as a leading motive, and denotes a wider range of emotion and sentiment than had found literary expression for several centuries, foreshadowing and, in a measure, preparing the modern novel; while the form is substantially that whose revival by Scott and Coleridge broke in a later age the artificial fetters which had prevailed to trammel English poetry.

It requires some consideration ere we can fully realise how extensive a store of material for fiction lay at the disposition of the romancers of the twelfth and the two following centuries. The development of fiction from the incidents of ordinary life was yet to come, or at least was beginning but feebly in the *fabliau*, corresponding to the modern metrical *conte*, and in the Italian novelette. The only material as yet generally recognised as proper for fiction was that consecrated by history or tradition, or at least professedly linked to some famous institution like Arthur's Round Table. Yet, even with these restrictions, the available store was very copious. The romancer had classical literature at his command to a great extent, much authentic history, and the two great legendary cycles of Troy and Alexander the Great. Homer, indeed, was inaccessible, but the apocryphal compilations attributed to Dictys Cretensis and Dares Phrygius supplied his place and something more. Virgil and Ovid were not unknown; many authentic passages of ancient history were familiar; and the Sibylline books were in themselves a literature. Charlemagne for France, Arthur for England, formed the nucleus of an extensive body of romance, and the adventures of their followers presented an illimitable field for invention. In course of time a number of miscellaneous romances sprang up, some, such as the powerful tale of Hamlet, derived from Scandinavian sources; others strangely distorted versions of Oriental ideas as conveyed in *Barlaam and Josaphat*, *Syntipas*, *Kalilah and Dimnah*. These almost invariably shade off into the avowedly didactic fiction, of which *Sidrac*, avowedly borrowed from the East, is an example: or into the allegorical, a near neighbour of the Æsopic fable, also well known, and helping to produce the world-famous fiction of Reynard the Fox, which renders the novel a weapon of satire. Bordering upon this, and hovering between satire and edification, we find religious visions of the other world, such as Tundale's trance, and the relation of St. Patrick's purgatory, rude precursors of the *Divina Commedia*. Nor must we forget legends of ecclesiastical miracle, sometimes pious monastic frauds or actual hallucinations, sometimes like the voyage of St. Brandan, Christianised versions of ancient myths. On the whole, it may well be affirmed that man's appetite for the marvellous was amply provided for in the Middle Age, and that nothing prevented the development of a rich poetical literature but the shortcomings of mediæval language. The tool was as yet inadequate to the work; the poet did not as yet possess either a sufficiently ample vocabulary, or sufficient command of the vocabulary he had. There was also an absolute lack on the audience's part of that critical taste which, when not itself

*Mediæval  
material for  
legendary  
poetry*

perverted, keeps up the standard of a literature ; and as the poet sang for a livelihood, with little care for posthumous reputation, he wanted the higher motives which in other ages have lent elevation to poetry.

*Metrical  
innovations  
of the English  
poets*

These points duly considered, the work of the metrical romancer must appear highly creditable. There is a clear distinction between the French



From the metrical romance of "Richard Cœur de Lion"

*Wynkyn de Worde, 1528*

who wrought for courts and the English who, writing in an unfashionable language, addressed a lower order of society, but this is no proof of the latter's inferiority in original power. In one respect the later English romancers are entitled to credit, their improvements in metrical form. The French poets, other than the authors of the *chansons de geste*, commonly write in octosyllabic couplets, taxed in a later day with "fatal facility," and consequently tending to prolixity, defects which the English minstrels of the time of Edward III. usually remedy by adopting a regular strophe, doubtless of French invention, and known as the *rime croisée* in distinction from the *rime plate*, or consecutive rhyme, demanding more care on the part of the writer and more grateful to the ear. The

following example of the *rime plate* is from the romance of *Richard Cœur de Lion*, where Richard, having "robbed the lion of his heart," proceeds to devour this raw, to the dismay of the Emperor of Germany :

The king at meat sat on des,<sup>1</sup>  
With dukes and earles proud in pres ;  
The sale<sup>2</sup> on the table stood ;  
Richard pressed out all the blood,  
And wet the hearte in the salt,  
The king and all his men behalt ;

<sup>1</sup> Dais.

<sup>2</sup> Salt cellar. The final e, when not elided before a following vowel, is sounded as a distinct syllable. *Behalt*, beheld ; *skeel*, quickly ; cognate with *shoot* and *scoot*. *Ywis*, certainly ; German *gewiss*.

Withuten bread the heart he ate.  
 The king he wondered, and said skeet,  
 Ywis, as I understand can,  
 This is a devil, and no man,  
 That has my strong lion yslawe,  
 The heart out of his body drawe,  
 And has it eaten with good will.  
 He may be called of righte skill,  
 King y-christened of most renown,  
 Strong Richard Cœur de Lion.

This is direct forcible writing, but has none of the metrical charm of the *rime croisée*, which develops the couplet into the stanza. The following example is from *Amis and Amilion* :

"Thou art," she said, "a gentle knight,  
 And I, a bird in bower bright,  
 And of high kin y-coren.  
 Both by day and by night  
 My love is on thee alight,  
 My wit is nigh forloren.  
 Plight me thy truth, thou shalt be true,  
 And never change for no new  
 That in this world is born.  
 And I shall pledge my truth also  
 Till God and death part us a-two,  
 I shall not be forsworn."  
 That hende<sup>1</sup> knighte stille stood,  
 For that he changed all his mood,  
 And said with wordes free,  
 "Madame ! for him that died on rood,  
 As thou art of gentil blood  
 And heire of this land shalt be.  
 Think on all thy much honour.  
 No kynge's son, no emperour  
 Were not too good for thee :  
 Certes, then were it unright  
 Thy love to lay upon a knight  
 That hath neither land nor fee."

This is a fair average specimen of the versification of the majority of the English metrical romances, and it is in general both musical and sonorous. If it occasionally appears to halt a little, the flaw was probably disguised in recitation. One of the most beautiful (*Lai le Fraine*) is in lines rhyming consecutively ; but here the refinement of the author's ear enabled him to dispense with artificial harmonies. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is in alliterative verse, divided into stanzas, each with a short refrain. The superiority of rhyme to alliteration for recitative purposes, especially if there was any musical accompaniment, must soon have become manifest : indeed the author of *William the Were-wolf* apologises for not rhyming on the ground of his finding alliteration easier. No one seems to have thought of turning the alliterative staves into rhymed metre until, "with a leap and a bound, the swift anapaests thronged" in at the Restoration.

<sup>1</sup> Gentle.

Contrary to reasonable anticipation, the Arthurian romance did not attain its full development in England until the fifteenth century, when the great prose compilation of Malory, being made at a more advanced period of the language, achieved what no mediæval minstrel could have done by giving our literature a permanent classic. As it cannot be noticed in this place, it will be desirable to refrain from the discussion of the leading Arthurian



**Sir Gawain and the Green Knight**

*From the fourteenth-century MS. in the British Museum*

metrical romances belonging to the Lancelot, Perceval, and Sanct Greal cycles, and the interesting question as to the part which Walter Map may have had in them, and to deal solely with those which lie on the verge of the Arthurian cycle. If the attention given to these and other romances should at first sight appear less than they might demand, it is to be remembered that they do not, strictly speaking, belong to English literature, being for the most part translations or free paraphrases from the French. Were they omitted, however, we should have little idea of the verse which delighted the higher classes of society while the people fed upon Piers Plowman. The public which they have in view is evidently

one able to appreciate refined sentiments and polished manners, but a grade below the highest, whose language is still French.

*Romance of  
"Sir Gawain"*

One of the Arthurian lays not intimately connected with the great Arthurian epic stands out boldly from the rest in poetical merit, and, at the same time, though owing much to Chrétien de Troyes, contains more original matter than usual. This is *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, the work of an anonymous minstrel, whom we shall afterwards meet as the author of a still more interesting poem, *The Pearl*. The subject is the humiliation of Sir Gawain, who, to acquire a magic scarf which will preserve him in imminent peril, to a slight extent deviates from the faith he has pledged to the Green Knight, and



dismissed by the latter with the scarf, returns to Arthur's court wearing this as a token of disgrace, but finds himself welcomed, and the scarf esteemed a badge of honour. It can scarcely be doubted that we have here a figurative setting forth of the institution of the Order of the Garter in 1347. Unfortunately, the language of the poem, which is in a West Midland dialect, is exceedingly crabbed, and the difficulty of following it is increased by the alliterative metre. It will be most enjoyed in Miss Jessie Weston's admirable prose version : for the sake, however, of adherence to the original form, we quote a stanza modernised by Mr. Gollancz :

O'er a mound in the morn he merrily rides  
 Into a forest full deep and wondrously wild ;  
 High hills on each side and holt woods beneath  
 With huge hoary oaks, a hundred together :  
 Hazel and hawthorn hung clustering there,  
 With rough ragged moss o'ergrown all around.  
 Unblithe, on bare twigs, sang many a bird,  
 Piteously piping for pain of the cold ;  
 Under these Gawayne on Gringolet glided  
 Through marsh and through mire, mortal full lonesome ;  
 Cumbered with care, lest ne'er he should come  
 To that sire's service, who on that same night  
 Was born of a bride to vanquish our bale.  
 Wherefore sighing he said, I beseech thee, O Lord,  
 And Mary, the mildest mother so dear,  
 Some homestead, where holily may I hear mass  
 And matins to-morrow, full meekly I ask,  
 Thereto promptly I pay pater, ave, and creed.  
     He rode on in his prayer,  
     And cried for each misdeed,  
     He crossed him oftener there,  
     And said, Christ's cross me speed !

This refrain, repeating the same sound but not the same words at the termination of every strophe, is known to the French minstrels as the "tail-rhyme" (*rime couée*).

Gawain appears to be a local hero from the British kingdom of Cumbria. Another British kingdom, Cornwall, supplies an important figure in King Mark, husband of the fair Yseult, and hence in close connection with Tristram of Lyonesse, not originally connected with the Arthurian cycle, but gradually made one of its leading personages, whose pathetic history has in our days afforded a theme for the music of Wagner and the poetry of Swinburne, Arnold and Binyon. There is a broad distinction between the two classes of the numerous mediæval poems treating of the subject : one, and the more numerous, exhibiting King Mark in the most unfavourable light, the other representing him as an object of respect ; the former making the effects of Brangwen's magic potion temporary, the latter representing them as perpetual ; the former connecting Tristram with the Arthurian cycle, the latter keeping him apart. The former class appears to derive from a possibly apocryphal minstrel named Bereul, the latter from an equally uncertain "Thomas of Brittany." Its chief representative is the German poem of *Gottfried of Strassburg*, a very fine

*Other  
 Arthurian  
 romances*

performance, admirably translated by Miss Jessie Weston, to whom we are also indebted for prose renderings of four delightful English romances of the outlying Arthurian romance—*Guingamor*, *Lanfal*, *Tyolet*, and the *Were-wolf*. *Guingamor* and *Lanfal* are fairy romances, which seems to leave no doubt of their Celtic origin, though they now exist only in the *lais* founded by Marie de France on the original traditions. The wild story of the *Were-wolf*, though versified by Marie under the title *Bisclavaret*, appears rather Teutonic than Celtic; her *Tyolet* reproduces the motive of the *Perceval* class of romances, so important a section of the Arthurian cycle, the boy with all the instincts of a warrior brought up afar from arms, and not knowing weapons even by sight. The situation of Achilles in Scyros is substantially the same, but does not admit the delightful *naïveté* of *Tyolet*, who takes the first knight he sees for a strange animal. "Tell me, thou Knight Beast, what dost thou bear on thy head?" "If," he tells his mother, "I may not be even such a beast as I saw, little joy shalt thou have of me henceforward."

The motives of *Tyolet* and the *Were-wolf* were blended together about the end of the twelfth century into the French romance of *Guillaume de Palerme*. The English version of this, made about 1340, has passages of singular beauty, one of which we give as modernised by Dr. Guest: A herdsman sits "clouting his shoon," while his dog noses in the grass, and the little child creeps out of the cave where he is being reared by the friendly were-wolf:

He gat him out of the bushes that were greenly blown,  
And leaved full lively, so that they gave great shade;  
And the birds right shrilly sang in the boughs;  
Forsooth for the melody that they made in the May season  
That little child, with joy, crept out of his cave,  
Fair flowers to fetch that he saw before him,  
And to gather some of the grapes that were green and fair.  
And when he had gone forth, so well it pleased him,  
The savour of the sweet season and the song of the birds,  
That he rambléd fast about, flowers to gather,  
And amused himself long while listening to that merry-making.

The child is discovered by the dog, and adopted by the Roman Emperor, with whose daughter he elopes when he is grown up. It being satisfactorily established, however, that he is a Sicilian prince, and that the were-wolf is a metamorphosed Spanish prince, all ends happily. It is a beautiful tale throughout, and the more interesting if we can suppose it to have originated among the Sicilian Normans.

Marie de  
France

MARIE DE FRANCE, authoress of the four *lais* rendered by Miss Weston, is one of the most interesting of poetesses. She has high claims to our attention, not merely from her genius, but as a connecting link between the literatures of France, England, and Brittany—French by her birth and language, English by residence for part of her life and the English translations made from her, Breton by the original sources of her poems. Her own statement to this effect is fully borne out by the local colouring of most of the pieces, especially by the part assigned in some of them to the fairies. She wrote twelve *lais* altogether,

4 Hundred miles

- **As** donny dytonys daas  
 f hoth oungelond yn good lades  
 yoyfoll a dyondy/ cu  
 of aloy f deas p sotto  
 f hyzt kinnal a hawto zotto  
 wote hoptonoy hode hpt deas  
 - **Donny dytony** som dellylo  
 foromwede yn fardonylo  
 dyth yoye a groat solad  
 And kynytes f deoy pfitable  
 a dytony of po yomido table  
 deony naon bottoy f nas  
 - **Deoy pfitable** a f deayn  
 byr wyhoyes a fagayn  
 And lannetor dulke  
 byr Bay and fpr deayn  
 pte deot compo fyte yn playn  
 batelos for to take  
 - **Fyng ban** deoyt a fyng bod  
 of ham y deas a groat los  
 hon fads po nodyoy hoy make  
 byr walahs a p lannfale  
 dyhoy of a nobles tale  
 A mong to schall a wale  
 - **De dytony** y deas a bachetoy  
 And haddo y be deot many a zoy  
 kinnal for yoy be hyte  
 be saf dyfeyd luygolyche  
 wote a felyoy p deas dyche  
 de stuyoy a to kynyte  
 - **for hys luygoss** a hys bomito  
 p kynytes fndap made deas ho  
 deon yoy y you plyte  
 of alle po kynytes of porille yande  
 de luygoss y nas widd y fownde  
 de dayes no be nyte

a. So hyr be fytt yn vō tynge vōr  
 aaylun deas aytyns comshloze  
 ho vaddo hym for to deunte  
 to hyns tyon of qrlond wxt  
 And fowt hym vōr a ldy byxt  
 deougo hys donzayr hande  
 = So ho dede a hom hoy brynt  
 Out fyr launful bydo hoy naxt  
 to of Emptes y deoy bōnde  
 for vōlady baylde of poynt deoyd  
 y scho haddo tōm empye vūy hoy bōnd  
 So folo vōy nād noon ounde  
 = vōy deoy pōtōdēd nō y vōn say  
 fōr on fūde pōnday  
 de forō pūced of mād ppyde  
 Roman no way tolle yn telle  
 what folk y deas at y bydalo  
 of comtōys fōy a deyde  
 = No nōf man deas yn halle y fōtō  
 Out ho deoy pōlō of bayonotte  
 yn hōtō vō naxt to bydo  
 of vōy fūte nōt alle y bydo  
 hōf fōm pōy deas deat a pōdō  
 deytōm yn dōt a fūde  
 And dehan y lōdō haddo ote yn vō halle  
 And vō clōpō deoy dūndōn alle  
 de vō mādō hōf a bypō  
 de hō botōlō fōntyn dehan  
 de alle vō lōdōd y deoy yn  
 at chōpō bōyō dēd a bypō  
 = vō quōnō vaf yfūde fōpō nōmō  
 dōlō a fōlōy a pōvōd fōmō  
 hōf cūpōyō to fūpō  
 = fūpō byxt fōlō zaf bycho of vōnō  
 Out fyr launful fōlō vaf no vūnō  
 fō gōuōdō hynm māny a fūde

From a MS. translation by Thomas Chestre of the "Lay of Launfal"  
by Marie de France

*British Museum, Cotton. MS. Caligula, A 2.*

some of which have in our time been imitated by the late Arthur O'Shaughnessy. Her Sir Launfal found a translator in Thomas Chestre, and *Lai le Fraine* (*Lay of the Ash Tree*) an anonymous interpreter as true a poet as herself :—

The maid took the child her mid<sup>1</sup>  
 And stale away in an even tid,  
 And passed over a wild heath,  
 Through field and thorough wood she geth  
 All the winter longe night.  
 The weather was clear, the moon was light,  
 So that she cum by a forest side ;  
 She wox all weary, and gan abide.  
 Soon after she gan heark  
 Cokes crow and dogges bark,  
 She arose, and thither wold ;  
 Near and nearer she gan behold  
 Walls and houses fele<sup>2</sup> she seigh ;  
 A church with steeple fair and high.  
 There n'as there nother street nor town,  
 But a house of religioun ;  
 An order of nonnes, well y-dight  
 To serve God both day and night.  
 The maiden abode no lengore,  
 But yede her to the church's door,  
 And on knees she set her down,  
 And said, weepand, her orisoun.  
 . . . . .  
 She looked up and by her seigh  
 An asche by her, fair and high  
 Well y-boughed, of mickle price.  
 The body was hollow, as many one is.  
 Therein she laid the child for cold  
 In the pell,<sup>3</sup> as it was, y-fold,  
 And blessed it with all her might  
 With that it gan to dawe light.  
 The fowles up, and sang on bough,  
 And acre-men yede to the plough.  
 The maiden turned again anon,  
 And took the way she had ere gon.

The metrical novelties of *Christabel* would evidently have been no novelties to the old poets. When Coleridge professed to have discovered a new principle of versification, he, in Dr. Guest's words, "mistook the gradual awakening of memory for the slow and tedious process of invention." It is remarkable that the very name of *Christabel* occurs in the metrical romance of *Sir Eglamour*, though Coleridge can hardly have known this.

The sole motive of *Marie de France* was the poetical ; the choice of her themes depended upon their intrinsic beauty and adaptation to poetical narrative. Another class of romance occupied itself with national or legendary heroes, and approximated more nearly to the epic. The most characteristic examples are the romances on the exploits of the national heroes Guy of Warwick and Bevis of Hampton ; but the most remarkable is that of Havelok

<sup>1</sup> With

<sup>2</sup> Many.

<sup>3</sup> Fur.

the Dane, both from its exceptional character as a Scandinavian story, and as probably the oldest example of a metrical romance in English literature, translated though it be from the French. It appears to date in its French version from the twelfth century, in its English from the thirteenth; but that it originates in an earlier tradition is shown by the capital of England being placed at Winchester instead of London; and, although the legend probably goes much farther back, the general atmosphere seeming to bespeak the days of Canute, the whole working-up of the plot appears suggested by the formidable position held by Earl Godwin under the Confessor. It is the story of a double and contemporaneous usurpation, of the crowns of England and Denmark, resulting, of course, in the ultimate restoration of the injured prince and princess, and their joyful reunion and fortunate reign. The dialect is East Midland with a Northern infusion. The translator says that he learned his poem from the Bretons, from whom he could only have received it through a French medium, which has not been discovered. Its assumed Breton origin is negatived by the absence of any Celtic element, whether of local colouring or local manner. One of the most certain tokens of Celtic influence (except in Ireland, whose beautiful legendary literature seems to have been unknown beyond its confines) is the employment of adultery as a leading motive. The



Bevis of Hampton defeated by Sir Murdour  
From Copland's edition of "*Syr Bevis of Hampton*"

existence of the same phenomenon in the French fiction of the present day may be adduced as a proof of the prevalence of the Celtic element over the Frankish in the ultimate constitution of the nation.

*King Horn* is another romance with a Scandinavian groundwork going back to the time of the expeditions of the Danish Vikings before their conversion to Christianity. Like Havelok, Horn is dispossessed of his kingdom in infancy, but recovers it. It has no great poetical merit. The French version is in the form of a *chanson de geste*. The same form was adopted for *Sir Bevis of Hampton*, while *Guy of Warwick* is a lyrical narrative. Both appear to be founded upon English traditions, appropriated by the Norman minstrels as suitable subjects, and frequently embellished by their fancy, and, when England's speech had acquired sufficient melody and flexibility, returning to her in the form of adaptations made about the time of Edward II. The English adapter was not a servile follower of his original. He would combine two sources, if

he possessed them. The author of the English romance of *Alexander*, who had before him both the Latin version of the legend in Philip Gautier's *Alexandreis*, and a French romance not identified, says in one place :---

This batail destuted<sup>1</sup> is  
In the French, wel ywis.  
Therefore I have, it to colour,  
Borrowed of the Latyn atour.

Another relieves the cantos or fyttes of his narrative by prefixing little passages of his own between lyric and description, precisely as has been done in our own day, in more elaborate fashion, and with more of poetical beauty, by William Morris in his *Earthly Paradise*.

The romance of *Alexander*, offspring of an alliance of Greek and Oriental imagination, was perhaps more generally known throughout the Middle Ages than any other, and was, near the close of the twelfth century, the subject of a Latin epic of great merit by Philip Gautier, already mentioned. About the same time England rivalled, if she did not surpass, this work by an epic on the mediæval legend of the Fall of Troy by Josephus Iscanus (Joseph of Exeter), whom Warton calls a miracle of poetry for his age. Virgil being then chiefly known as an enchanter, the poems of Iscanus and Gautier could not fall under the ban as "faint Virgilian echoes,



Guy of Warwick defeating the Giant

From Copland's edition of "*Guy of Warwick*," 1560

better burnt." Modelling themselves principally upon Statius, the bards produced poetry in most surprising contrast with the barbarous Leonines which were still in universal use for epitaphs, metrical chronicles, and congratulatory poems. We can never sufficiently regret the loss of Iscanus's *Antiocheis*, an epic on the Crusades, in which he had himself taken part. Much about the same time the Trojan romance of Dares Phrygius, a pseudonymous author of the sixth century, was naturalised in French by the poem of Benoît de Saint More, and vied with the popularity of Alexander and Arthur. These contributed to thrust the Charlemagne saga into the background; English poetical development came too late for it, and its representatives in our literature—*Roland and Ferragus*, *Sir Otuel*, *Ferunbras*, are few and insignificant. The romance of *King Robert of Sicily*, though it could not have

<sup>1</sup> Imperfectly narrated.

assumed the shape in which we find it until after the Norman conquest of that island, carries us back to the legendary history of Solomon. The leading incident in both is Rabbinical, with the difference, not unimportant to the lieges, that the administration of Robert's kingdom during his absence is undertaken by an angel, and that of Solomon's by a demon. No connection can be shown between the legendary Robert and any of the historical Norman princes of the name. This list of national or professedly historical romances may be closed by the mention of one already quoted, that of *Richard Cœur de Lion*. The fusion of Norman and Saxon in the thirteenth century made this Angevin monarch, who probably could not speak English, a national hero, and the originally modest record of his exploits by a Norman minstrel was in the fourteenth century embellished by an Englishman, who introduced most of the obviously legendary element, and regarding Richard as an authentic John Bull, vilifies his hero's real countrymen, who, he says, are valiant in speech, but, when blows seem likely to supervene upon words,

Begin to drawn in their horns  
As a snail among the thorns.

There remains a considerable class of unaffiliated romances, and others which, although connected with some cycle of romance, have not been incorporated with it. Among these latter is *Ywain and Gawain*, which, originally Celtic, passed through the medium of Chrétien de Troyes' *Knight of the Lion*, and the English rendering of this, to be restored to Welsh literature as *The Lady of the Fountain*, the first story in the Mabinogion. The story of Geraint in the Mabinogion, also originally Celtic, came back to Wales through a romance of Chrétien's, *Erec and Enide*. The contrast between these Normanised romances in the Mabinogion and the tales which preserve their original Celtic characteristics unimpaired, such as *The Dream of Rhonabwy*, *Pwyll Prince of Dyfed*, is most curious and interesting.

Among the miscellaneous romances which remain to be briefly noticed the most beautiful is *Floris and Blanchefleur*, which is represented in most mediæval literatures. The theory of its originally Spanish origin is inadmissible, but in its tolerance and spirit of humanity it does seem to bear traces of influence from some land where Christian and Moslem often lived in amity. Floris and Blanchefleur are foster-children, and the prince's attachment for his humbler mate is first disclosed by his refusal to learn his lessons unless Blanchefleur learns them along with him. She consequently becomes within five years mistress of Latin and of the art of writing upon parchment. When Floris insists upon wedding her she is sold into captivity; he pursues, and discovers her at the court of the Admiral (Spanish *almirante*=*emir*) of Babylon. He gains access to her, the natural consequences ensue, including detection, to have been followed by decapitation if the lovers' tenderness and devotion had not disarmed the Saracen prince:—

His sword he braid<sup>1</sup> out of his sheath  
The children to have done to death

<sup>1</sup> Snatched.

*“Floris and  
Blanchefleur”*

Blanche fleur put forth her swire,<sup>1</sup>  
 And Floris agen her did tirc.<sup>2</sup>  
 "I am a man, I shall go before,  
 Thou mightest nought my death acore."<sup>3</sup>  
 Floris forth his nekke bet,<sup>4</sup>  
 And Blanche fleur withdrew him yet.  
 Neither might the other thole<sup>5</sup>  
 That the other deide before.  
 Alle that y-seen this  
 Therfor sorry were iwis.  
 Though the Amiral wroth he were  
 Yet he changede his cheere,  
 For either would for the other die,  
 And he saw many weeping eye.  
 And, for he loved so much that may,  
 All weeping he turned away.  
 His sword fell out of his hand to ground,  
 Nor might he hold it in thikke stounde.<sup>6</sup>

There is also great pathos in the tale of *Amis and Amiloun*, where one friend gives his children's hearts' blood to cure the other of his leprosy; and in the mediæval version of the tale of *Orpheus*, which ends happily. The story of *Sir Isumbras*, a good knight, severely punished for pride and ingratitude to the Giver, reads like an echo of the history of Nebuchadnezzar. *Sir Degrevant* has interesting pictures of manners and customs. Among the best of the remainder may be named *Ypomedon* (remarkable for its delineation of chivalric manners), *Eglamour*, *Emare*, *Triamour*, *The Earl of Toulouse*, and *The Kunge of Tars* [Tarsus]. This last-named romance is remarkable for a battle-scene of extraordinary vigour between the armies of the King of Tars and his would-be father-in-law, the Sultan of Damascus, and for the spirited step of the King's daughter in eloping to marry the Sultan, though he is a heathen whom she has never seen, merely to stay the effusion of blood. The scene where the converted Sultan destroys his idols evinces considerable humour, a rare excellence in English poetry until Langland and Chaucer. *The Squier of Lou Degre* is remarkable for the admission that such a person might conceivably wed a king's daughter; and for the wonderful catalogue of delights which the King of Hungary offers to his daughter to wean her from her attachment, which brings together in our view whatever was thought precious or desirable in the Middle Ages.

*The Fabliau  
in English*

While the romance flourished in England, the graceful French *fabliau* was neglected: fancy and humour had not yet become attributes of the English Muse. Two compositions of the thirteenth century, however, make a near approach to the *fabliau*: one, the little dialogue of *Siriz*, where, through the craft of an old procuress, a maiden is persuaded to hearken to the suit of a young clerk from dread of the effects of his magical arts; the other the rhymed disputation of the owl and the nightingale, which, could we suppose Milton acquainted with it, might have given him the hint of his *Allegro* and *Penseroso*

<sup>1</sup> Neck.

<sup>2</sup> Pull.

<sup>3</sup> Feel grievously.

<sup>4</sup> Bent.

<sup>5</sup> Suffer. A rare instance of assonant rhyme.

<sup>6</sup> That same time.



Like Milton, the poet holds the balance fairly even, though with some slight inclination towards the owl, who reproaches the nightingale not merely with her frivolity but with her cheerfulness. The ascetic bent is unmistakable, the nightingale is only allowed to defend herself on ethical grounds. At last the birds agree to refer their controversy to "Nicholas of Guildford," a clerk whose virtues are so highly extolled that, if modesty were among them, he can hardly be what we might otherwise suspect him of being, the author himself. The imagination which might have turned the prolonged wrangle into a lively tale



"Ye Noble Helyas Knyghte of the Swanne" (about 1550)

is wanting, yet the poem is fluent and spirited, though the poet may seem forgetful of his own precept:—

For harp and pipe and fowles' song  
Misliketh, if it is too long.

The dialect is southern, and the piece may well have been written at or near Guildford in the reign of Henry the Third. In a somewhat similar poem belonging to the following reign, the thrush and the nightingale dispute respecting the merits of women, the former vituperating the fair sex until she is silenced by the instance of the Virgin Mary.

We must pass over a century to find another example of a poem not coming under the description of romance or ecclesiastical legend or political verse; a production, indeed, to this date almost unprecedented in English poetry. For a long time past our attention has perforce been entirely given to objective poetry, the poetry of action, or of passion intimately connected with action. Revelations of the poets' inner feelings have come by brief and fitful flashes,

*Elegiac  
Poetry—  
"The Pearl"*

no one has cared to depict the feelings of his own bosom since Anglo-Saxon bards of the earlier time meditated over Roman ruins, or complained of separation and absence. The long-neglected elegiac vein comes to light again in an anonymous poet, in all probability the author of *Gawain and the Green Knight*, who, about the middle of the fourteenth century, the very time when Petrarch is lamenting his lost Laura, bewails his own bereavement in an infant



Illustration from "The Pearl"

From the fourteenth-century MS. in the British Museum

daughter. The little girl had been named Margaret, hence *The Pearl* is the title of his poem. The allegory soon disappears and gives place to genuine human feeling so powerfully expressed as to insure the writer a unique place among early English poets. Nor are his claims limited to intensity of expression; his style is his own, and he has devised a stanza of remarkable sonority, and more lyric swing and flow than we have hitherto encountered. The drawback is, as in *Gawain*, the dialectical crabbedness of his diction, which none but a very thorough scholar in Early English would easily overcome without the aid of Mr. Gollancz's careful version accompanying the original text. This harshness does not extend to the versification, which, on the contrary, gives

us what we have not yet encountered in English poetry, a complicated form of twelve-line stanza, combining rhyme with alliteration, buoyed up and rendered musical by true poetical feeling. The romancers, as we have seen, can long maintain a pleasant rippling melody, like Coleridge's brook that "singeth a quiet tune," and now and then stumble upon some real metrical felicity; but, an occasional song excepted, *The Pearl* is the first example of genuine lyrical poetry, except for the nearly contemporary songs to be subsequently noticed. The cause is the same in both cases: the authors really felt what they were writing. This deep feeling accompanies the poet of *The Pearl* even when he turns aside for awhile from his sorrow to depict the halo of beauty enveloping his lost one. His imagery, indeed, is earthly; but he describes the vestibule

of Paradise, not Paradise itself, and does not, like Dante or Swedenborg, claim to be a seer. Notwithstanding the injury to his metrical effects, he must be quoted in Mr. Gollancz's version :—

The hill-sides there were crowned  
With crystal cliffs full clear,  
And holts and woods all bright with bole  
Blue as the blue of Inde,  
And trembling leaves, thick every branch  
As burnished silver sheen.  
With shimmering sheen they glistened  
Touched by the gleam of the glades.  
And the gravel that rolled on that strand  
Was precious orient pearl.  
The sun's own light had paled before  
That sight so wondrous fair.

If the dazzle of silver and lapis-lazuli seems garish, it must be remembered that this enchanted land shines by its own light, and that its hues are chosen to harmonise with the central idea of the allegory, the lost *Pearl*.

The poem has many affinities to Dante and Petrarch, sufficiently explained by the similarity of the situation. Like the great Italians, the poet has a heavenly vision of his lost one; but, unlike theirs, she is separated from him by an impassable river, and he does not approach her near enough to be able to say :—

“Why ceased she speaking? why withdrew her hand?  
For, rapt to ecstasy by words like these,  
Little I wanted to have stayed in Heaven.”

In Heaven, indeed, he has never been, but he has seen it afar off, and returns from its precincts consoled.

*The Pearl* exists in the same Cottonian MS. as *Sir Gawaine*, and was long overlooked from being blended with two other poems, *Clannesse* and *Patience*, no doubt by the same author, the first on the Old Testament narratives of the Deluge, the destruction of the Cities of the Plain, and the fall of Belshazzar; the second on the history of Jonah. Both are in alliterative verse, and exhibit a decided reaction towards the Anglo-Saxon spirit as well as form. The description of the storm in Jonah, for instance, might well have come from a contemporary of Cynewulf :—

From the north-east the rain begins, and  
When brisk breezes blew on those pale waters  
Rough clouds arose with fiery redness beneath.  
The sea sobbed full sore, 'twas wondrous to hear  
The winds and wan waters so wrestle together  
That the waves were wafted full wildly on high,  
And then sought the abyss where fishes do breed.  
Nowhere for roughness durst it abide  
When the blast and the brook<sup>1</sup> and the ruin then met.  
'Twas a joyless craft that Jonah was in  
As it reeled around on those rough waves.

<sup>1</sup> This word can hardly be used in the ordinary sense.



clearly is not the first of its kind. Its popularity is evinced by its having been set to music. Had not the primitive musical compositions of the age so



Illustration from "The Pearl"

*From the fourteenth-century MS. in the British Museum*

generally perished, it is probable that many more songs might be retrieved from among them. Another similar waif is the pretty burden :—

Blow, northern wind,  
Send thou me my sweeting.  
Blow, northern wind, blow, blow, blow!

This is appended to a love poem in twelve stanzas, with which it has a merely

musical connection, and is clearly a popular refrain. Love-songs are not very numerous, and in general appear open to the same charge as the similar

ymer is iamen in. Thude sing cucu. Growes sed and blowes  
 Perspice xpicola que dignacio celicus agrico  
 med and springe se ude nu. Sing cucu. Ave bletet after  
 la pro uicis vicio. fili o — non partent expoli  
 lomb thoup after calue cu. Bulluc stertep. bucke uertep  
 it moztis exicio — Qui captiuos seminiuos  
 aynie sing cucu. Cucu cucu. Wel singes pu cucu ne swik  
 a supplicio — Vite donat, et seam coronat. in ce  
 bu nauer nu. li so li o  
 Hanc notam cantare possint quatuor socij. A paucio  
 ribus autem qm a tribus ut saltem duobus no debet  
 dici. pro eo qui dicit pedem. Cantat autem sic. Gaen  
 talis acris in inchoat cu huius q tenet pedes. Et cu uenerit  
 ad primam notam post crucem inchoat alius. Et sic de ceteris  
 singli u repauescit ad pausa. nes sepa  
 si alibi spacio unius longe notae  
 sing cucu nu. Sing cucu. hoc repetit uniuersus op est  
 faciens pausacionem in fine  
 hoc dicit alio paulant in medio et in  
 sing cucu. Sing cucu nu. fine. Et immediate repetit principium.

Old English Spring Song

From a MS. preserved in the British Museum

compositions of the French and Provençal troubadours on which they were probably modelled; they proceed rather from the head than from the heart.

The lady would have been sung with more fervour, or sued with more persuasiveness, if she had really existed. When this essential condition is fulfilled, the poet can be moving. We quote the first stanza of *Alysoun*, evidently no mere creature of the imagination :—

Between March and Averil,  
 When spray begins to spring,  
 The little fowl hath her will  
 In her lud<sup>1</sup> to sing.  
 I live in love-longing  
 For seemliest of allé thing.  
 She may me blissé bring,  
 I am in her baundoun,<sup>2</sup>  
 An hendé<sup>3</sup> hap I have y-hent,<sup>4</sup>  
 I wot from heaven it is me sent,  
 From all women my love is lent<sup>5</sup>  
 And lit on Alisoun.

We have seen how important a part religion occupied in the thought of the people during the Anglo-Norman age. Its place in literature is, no doubt, somewhat disproportionate owing to the preponderance of the clergy, the only class whose members had for the most part received something approaching to a literary training, and from whom the ranks of authorship, minstrelsy apart, were in consequence chiefly recruited. If the number of parishes was less than now, and if the intellectual energies of Nonconformity had no existence, the balance was more than redressed by the multitude of monks and friars. The age, therefore, was not quite so religious as it seemed if judged by its literature, but enough poetry which cannot have had a merely professional origin survives to prove the reality of the religious factor in the people's intellectual life. Much more would probably have existed had congregational singing been practised, but for this there was no scope so long as the Church services continued to be in Latin. The pieces which remain are usually characterised by deep feeling and abundant contrition. We give the following *Winter Song* from Mr. Kennedy's translation of Ten Brink, who remarks that it "so closely joins reflection and perception that the whole become an image of subjective feeling" :—

Winter wakeneth all my care ;  
 Now the leaves wax dry and bare ;  
 Oft I mourn and in despair  
 Sigh when comes into my thought  
 How this world's joy it goeth all to nought.

Now it is and now no more,  
 As it ne'er had place before.  
 Man hath truly said of yore,  
 All goeth but God's will,  
 We shall all die, though it may please us ill.

*The Religious  
 lyric*

<sup>1</sup> Lud, language.

<sup>2</sup> Baundoun, power.

<sup>3</sup> Hende, fair.

<sup>4</sup> Y-hent, taken.

<sup>5</sup> Lent, stolen.

Sad thoughts press me sore, I ween,  
 When I see the fallen green.  
 Jesus, let thy help be seen.  
 Go we hence, shield us from hell ;  
 I know not whither I shall go nor how long here I dwell.

*Political  
Songs*

A more important department of the lyrical poetry of the age is the political, which would have formed an extensive chapter in the history of English literature if it had usually been in English. The English lyric could hardly exist until England had assimilated the Norman systems of metre and rhyme. We have seen rhyme making its way into English verse in Layamon's *Brit* at the beginning of the thirteenth century, but the alliterative system still greatly preponderates ; and Layamon was a scholar acquainted not merely with the French examples of rhyming verse, but with the sonorous, if uncouth, jingle of the monkish Leonines. There seems no extant trace of any application of rhyme to the expression of lyrical emotion for half a century, when, as is probable, the *Cuckoo Song*, already cited, was written, and, as is certain, the first known English political song was composed in exultation at the overthrow of Henry III. at the Battle of Lewes, and derision of the sorry plight of the King's brother Richard of Cornwall, who, if our rhymers may be believed, mistook a mill for a castle. The popular poetry of the age, it is to be noted, is invariably on the side of the Commons. Somewhat later, we have bold remonstrances against the excessive taxation imposed by Edward I. For a long time, nevertheless, this description of poetry is more frequently in Latin or French than in English, and not uncommonly in a curious macaronic form produced by the employment of Latin or French lines alternately with English. There can hardly have been any motive for the use of this singular mosaic but the sense of humour derived from the perception of the incongruity, and from this point of view it is a welcome symptom of the awakening of a faculty in which English literature has hitherto been deficient. After Edward II., however, popular songs in French become very rare, although a court poet, aiming to celebrate and stimulate the martial ambition of Edward III. and his barons, composes in that language his *Lay of the Heron*, a piece inspired by the most high-flown sentiments of chivalry, inciting Edward to assert his title to the crown of France.

*Patriotic  
Poetry—  
Lawrence  
Minot*

The accession of Edward III. marks a great development in English national pride and England's consciousness of herself. The former feeling had been cruelly mortified in the preceding reign by the disaster of Bannockburn. Satisfied with having, in some measure, requited this overthrow by the victory of Haindon Hill, and convinced of the impracticability of the reconquest of Scotland, the nation turned with eagerness to vindicate its *amour propre* at the expense of its most assailable neighbour. It is not unlikely that the detestation in which Edward II.'s French queen Isabella was so justly held contributed to arouse an antipathy to France of which few traces are discerned in previous ages, and which was as fully entertained by the descendants of the Norman conquerors as by those of their Saxon vassals. To the philosophic



historian Edward III.'s French wars appear equally immoral and irrational, but their effect on the national literature was most salutary. After 1328 the employment of French by English authors becomes rare; in 1362 the statutes of the realm begin to be drawn up in English; and the feeling is evidently taking root that it does not become an Englishman to express himself in any other language except, upon fit occasion, Latin. Books designed to influence public opinion, from *Piers Plowman* downwards, are now written in English; and whereas the deeds of Cœur de Lion had been celebrated by French minstrels, Edward's are sung by a North-countryman, LAWRENCE MINOT. Such, at least, is the inference as to Minot's extraction deducible from his dialect and from the frequent occurrence of his name in Yorkshire. Of his life we know nothing, but he would seem to have been a soldier with a turn for poetry, and probably a member of the circle surrounding Edward III. He wrote ten ballads on the chief military and naval events of Edward's reign down to 1352. He is a simple, unadorned, vigorous writer, an ardent but narrow patriot, with no recondite fancy or feeling, but attentive to metrical forms, of which he has a considerable variety. The following stanzas, deriding the King of France's retreat before Edward without accepting battle, are a fair specimen of his downright style:—

Our king and his men held the felde  
 Stalworthy, with spere and schelde,  
 And thoght to win his right.  
 With lordes, and with knightes kene,  
 And other doughty men bidene  
 That was ful frek<sup>1</sup> to fight.

When Sir Philipp of France herd tell  
 That King Edward in feld walld dwell,  
 That gaynéd him no glee.  
 He trusted of no better boot,  
 But both on hors and on foot  
 He hasted him to flee.

It seeméd he was ferd for strokes,  
 When he did fell his grete okes  
 About his pavilyonne:  
 Abated then was all his pride,  
 For longer there he noht durst bide.  
 His boast was brought all down.

A long way from this rude military minstrelsy to Boileau's stately ode on the taking of Namur, and Prior's more stinging if less dignified retort upon a change of fortune! Minot, nevertheless, deserves to live in literary history as the first English poet to celebrate English victories over foreign enemies. The circumstance that his poems have been preserved in only one manuscript suggests that he may have had competitors whose productions have failed to reach us.

Another vent for the political feeling of the day was provided by the vision in which the course of events was foreshadowed in accordance with the poet's

*Political  
 allegories  
 and satires*

<sup>1</sup> Eager.

wishes under the veil of prophecy, or set forth as allegory. A remarkable instance of the former is the prophecy on the history of England ascribed to St. John of Bridlington, and which, written between 1360 and 1372, continued to be regarded as an authority until after the end of the century. The growth of Lollard opinions, also, favoured the publication of metrical attacks upon the corruptions of the clergy, verse being frequently preferred to prose as more pungent and more easily committed to memory. Piers Plowman's *Crede*, already mentioned, is an example, and shows the influence of Langland's poem in effecting a temporary revival of alliterative verse. The reaction is further evinced by *The Quatrefoil of Love*, and other religious poems, and by a poem on the deposition of Richard II., the work of a zealous Lancastrian, a man of culture beyond the common if he was really acquainted with Petrarch.<sup>1</sup>

*Metrical  
Chronicle.  
Robert of  
Gloucester  
and Robert  
Manning*

These political ditties form a transition to the metrical chronicles of England produced in the same age, though nothing can be more alien from their really lyrical spirit than the dulness of the chroniclers. Two of the latter nevertheless occupy a conspicuous place by the mere bulk of their performances. ROBERT OF GLOUCESTER (about 1300) based his rhyming history upon Geoffrey of Monmouth, Henry of Huntingdon, and William of Malmesbury. It has no independent historical value until the writer arrives at his own times, when we find ourselves listening to one who has been within thirty miles of the field of Evesham on the day of Simon de Montfort's overthrow. It terminates, however, five years afterwards, although an allusion to the canonisation of Louis IX. indicates that it cannot have been written before 1297. Its poetical merit is very small, but its archæological and topographical details are frequently interesting, and it is valuable as an index to the feeling with which a patriotic Englishman of Edward I.'s time had come to regard the Norman. He is quite resigned to the Norman occupation; they will dwell here for ever, he says. He has ceased to consider the intruders as foreigners, and only regrets that French should be generally spoken by them; but the very complaint shows that he regarded English as the mother-tongue of Englishman and Norman alike, and, consequently, the Normans as Englishmen. This further intimates that England must have been well

<sup>1</sup> This cannot be affirmed, but there is a curious resemblance between the English poet's denunciation of the luxury of Richard II. and some lines in Petrarch's famous sonnet against the Papal Court at Avignon:—

To rewle as reremys [bats],  
And rest on the daies,  
And spend of the spicerie  
More than it needis,  
Both weye and wyn

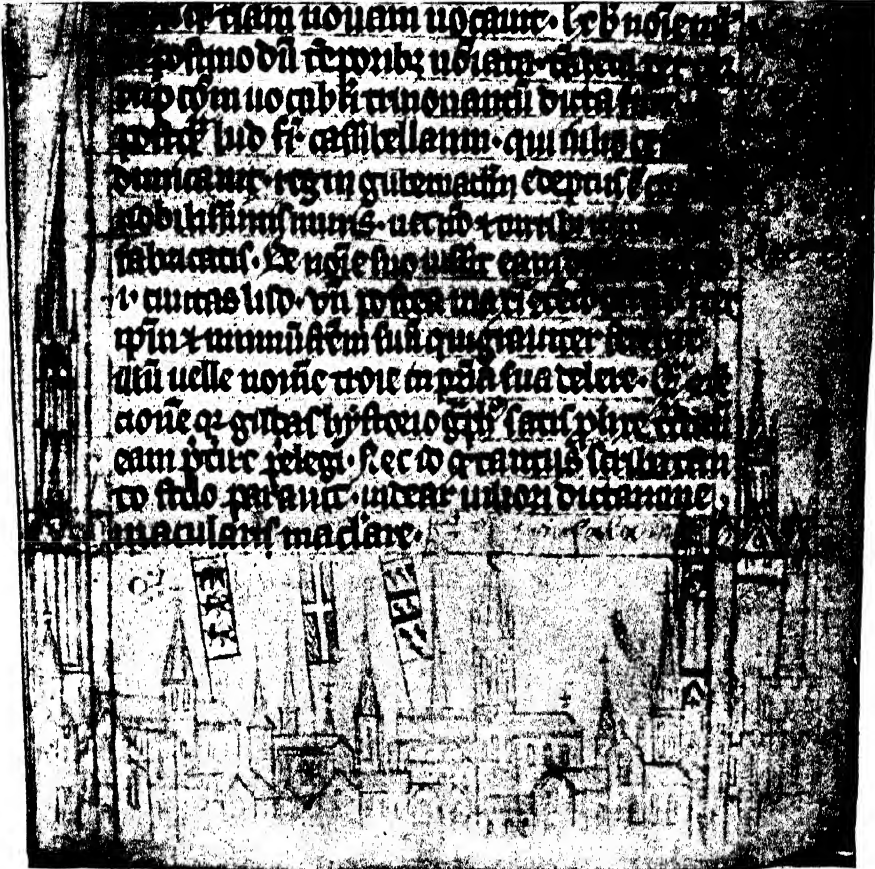
In wast alle aboute.  
With deyntis ydoubled,  
And daunsing to pypis,  
In myrthe with moppis,  
Myrrours of synne.

Petrarch says (Sonnet cv):—

Nido di tradimenti, in cui si cova  
Quanto mal per li mondi oggi si spande;  
Di via serve, di leti e di vivande,  
In cui l'usuria fa l'ultima proda.  
Per le camere de l'andrie e vecchie  
Vanno frescando: e l'altre in mezzo  
Co' mastici e col fango e co' li spessali

leavened with Norman ideals by the end of the thirteenth century. Of Robert's life we know no more than that he was a Gloucestershire monk. His dialect is that of his native county.

The other narrative poem on English history which the age of Edward has bequeathed to us is by ROBERT MANNYNG, or BRUNNE, already mentioned as the adapter of Waddington's *Handling of Synne*, but in the main a translation from



From early fourteenth-century MS. of Geoffrey of Monmouth, with contemporary pencil sketch of London

*British Museum, 13 A. 3*

the French. Singularly enough, the original author is not a Frenchman but an Englishman, PETER OF LANGTOFT, a canon of the Augustinian Priory of Bridlington in Yorkshire. It comes down to the death of Edward I., and, though written in barbarous and ungrammatical French, would seem from Mannyng's translation and the number of MSS. preserved to have been popular in the North of England. Like Robert of Gloucester's chronicle, it is in the earlier portion a mere compilation, but is of some historical value for contemporary events, especially for Edward's wars in Scotland. Mannyng's

English version departs from the original in many respects, following Wace rather than Geoffrey of Monmouth. Its poetical merit is small, but its philological importance is very great, it being, with the writer's translations from Waddington and Bonaventura, the first considerable example of the Midland dialect which was to prevail over the speech of the other shires, and to furnish England with a standard of diction.

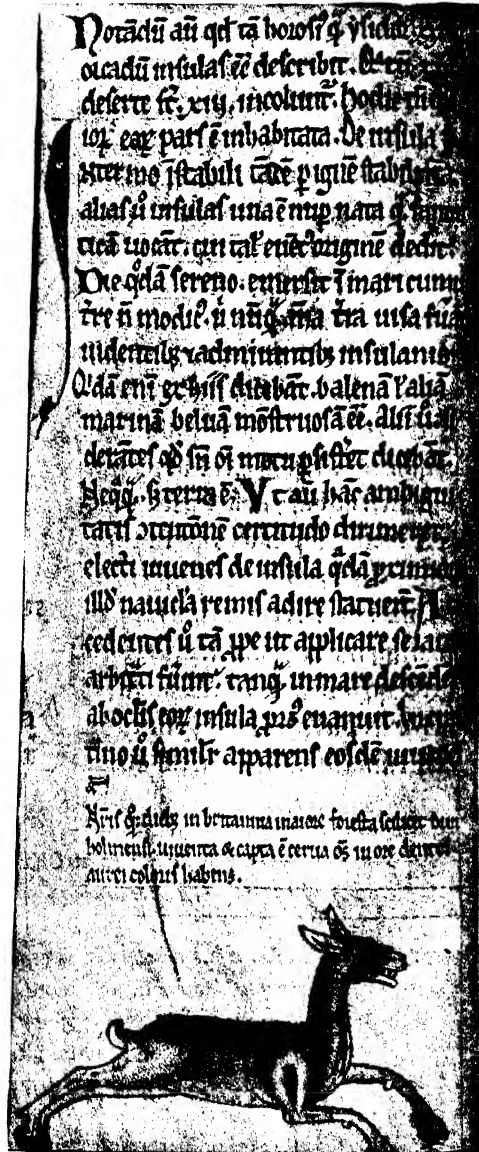
*English  
historians  
writing in  
Latin*

The historian of the early stages of a literature can rarely find much occasion to dwell upon its prose, for poetry is almost always in the van. This is easily accounted for when it is considered that most branches of prose literature require more thought and knowledge than can well exist in a generally unlettered society, and that in such a society the office of the prose writers for whom there might be room, such as the historian and the biographer, is most efficiently discharged by the poet. In modern Europe, down to a recent date, we have also to take account of a circumstance which would have astonished the ancients, the custom of literary composition in a dead language. If Anglo-Saxon literature enjoys the unique position of possessing a vernacular history in its "chronicle," the cause is not the superior enlightenment of the annalists, but their inability to write Latin. All mediæval languages, consequently, have to deplore the loss of writers who would have ranked among their greatest ornaments if they had written in the vernacular, but whom the historian of native literature is obliged to pass over. It is impossible to so much as name the mass of Latin writers who flourished in England during the Anglo-Norman period; it can only be said that, they being chiefly monks and priests, the bulk of their writings were inevitably theological or philosophical, and that when they ventured on history or poetry they commonly wrote from the point of view of their own monasteries. The age's theologians and philosophers are indispensable for the comprehension of its intellectual activity, and the chroniclers for its history, but neither fall strictly within the province of the literary historian. Five eminent men, however, have produced works, which though not originally English have become so by translation, and are read with interest and pleasure at this day. These, therefore, seem to demand a brief notice, and may be taken as representatives of the crowd of minor historical writers.

**William of Malmesbury** (1093-1143) was brought up in the great abbey of Malmesbury, of which he became librarian, and might have been abbot if he had desired. His writings show him to have been far above the average of his time in learning and literary ability. Under him the long-neglected art of historical composition revived; he is the first English historian after Bede entitled to a higher rank than that of analyst. The merit, indeed, of one of his chief works, the *Gesta Regum*, a history of England from 449 to 1125, is rather literary than historical until it approaches his own times, copying his predecessors in matters of fact, but full of stories of the most dissimilar character excellently told. His appendix to this work, the *Historia Novella*, is our principal authority for the reign of Stephen; and his *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum* has been described as "the foundation of the early ecclesiastical history of England, on which all writers have chiefly built."

The claims of **Geoffrey of Monmouth**, Bishop of St. Asaph (1100?–1154), are of quite another kind. Though appearing in the guise of an historian, his true character is that of the great romancer of his age. It does not follow that he intentionally practised deception; he may well have believed the Celtic legends with which his *History of the Britons* is crowded, for the preservation of which we are infinitely obliged to him. The extremely important and beneficial part performed by his history as a means of allaying race animosities by persuading the various nations inhabiting Britain of their common origin, and its value as a treasury of themes for poets and romancers, have been dwelt upon in our account of Layamon's *Brut*. Geoffrey, who only became a priest and bishop in his latter years, is represented as a man of great accomplishments. The question whether he was the more credulous or mendacious did not occur to his contemporaries as a subject for inquiry, but was decided in the less favourable sense by the two next historians on our list. William of Newburgh censures him magisterially; and Giraldus Cambrensis, anticipating Arbuthnot's maxim that a lie is best refuted by a bigger lie, narrates the case of one obsessed by evil spirits, who obtained relief when the Gospel of St. John was laid upon his breast, "but if the *History of the Britons* was substituted, they instantly reappeared in greater numbers, and remained a longer time than usual on his body and on the book."

Geoffrey might well be antipathetic to **William of Newburgh** (1136–1198), for William is so eminently the English philosophical historian of the Middle Ages as to have gained from Professor Freeman the title of "the father of historical criticism." His history of England, which covers the period of his own life with a short introduction from the Conquest downwards, shows a power of weighing evidence, a breadth of view, and an independence of judgment most unusual in his age, and not too common in any.

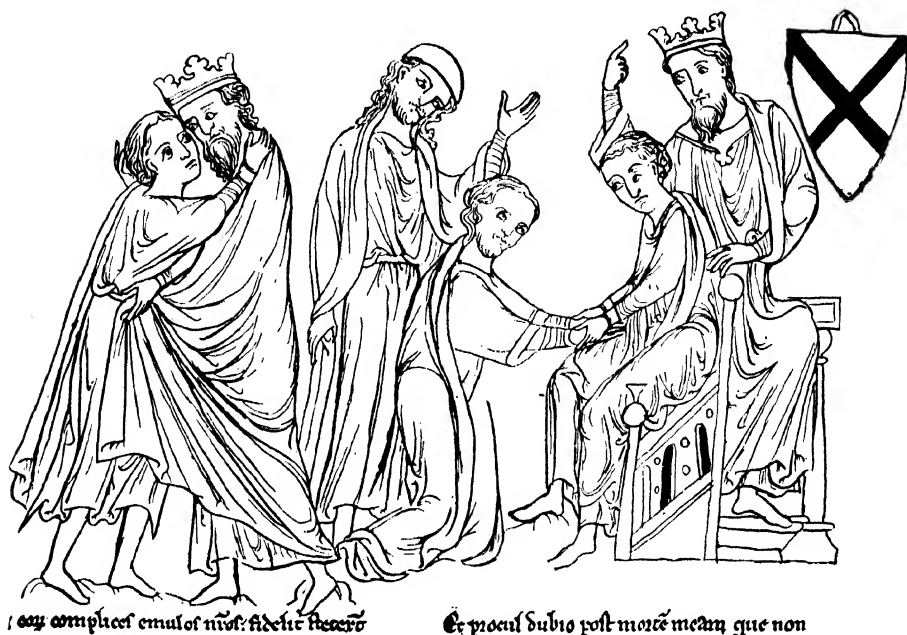


Page from fourteenth-century MS. of  
Giraldus Cambrensis

British Museum, 13 B. 8

He exhibits all the qualities of a statesman, but there is no indication of his having ever left his monastery.

**Giraldus de Barry**, commonly known as **Giraldus Cambrensis** (1146?-1220?), was one of the most picturesque and original characters of his age. His agitated life was mainly passed in contests for the bishopric of St. David's, to which the chapter would have elected him, but from which the king and the Archbishop of Canterbury successfully debarred him. The dispute was partly political, the Welsh desiring a bishop of their own nationality, a condition fulfilled by Giraldus in virtue of his birth in Pembrokeshire and his descent from a princely Welsh family on the mother's side.



From MS. *Life of Offa* by Matthew Paris

British Museum, Cotton. MS. Nero D 1

His autobiography, *De rebus a se gestis*, is entertaining and valuable but his best known work is the *Itinerarium Cambriae*, an account of his journey with Archbishop Baldwin to preach the crusade in Wales, and of the effect produced by his own Latin sermons, unintelligible as these were to the hearers. In the interval of his favour with Henry II. he visited Ireland and composed a topographical description of the country and a history of the English conquest.

Giraldus was a man of parts and learning, but scarcely an historian. **Matthew Paris** (1200?-1259) is not merely an historian, but, what his country never knew before him, the official representative of the history of his age. Brought up in the scriptorium of the abbey of St. Albans, the calligrapher matured into the historiographer, and when it became known that the chronicler's office had passed from the hands of the worthy but arid Roger of Wendover into those of a scholar and man of the world, Matthew came to fill a position somewhat analogous to that enjoyed in our day by a representative of a foreign journal at a great capital. All, from the king downwards, were ambitious of his good word, and it says much for him that with all the influences

brought to bear upon him he should have written with so much independence. His outlook upon the world is wider than that of any of his predecessors, he records contemporary transactions in foreign countries, dwells on natural phenomena, and illustrates his manuscripts with drawings of interesting objects, which if executed by his own hand, as is most probably the case, prove him to have been a gifted artist. But his highest title to fame is that of the patriotic historian who, though a favourite with King Henry III. and personally attached to him, represented the transactions of his reign as they really were, protesting indignantly against the spoliation of Church and State for the enrichment of foreign countries and ecclesiastics and the continual encroachments upon popular liberties. Paris's history covers the period from 1235 to 1259; he also revised the chronicles of St. Albans from the Conquest to his own time, and made an abridgment of his own history.

These eminent men had one point in common between themselves and less distinguished writers: they were not professional men of letters. Authorship was an accident of their career, imposed upon them by the circumstances of their lives or the particular office they might fill; the profession to which they looked for a livelihood was almost invariably the ecclesiastical. Literature as a profession was evidently impossible in the absence of a reading class, and it is easy to discern how greatly the intellectual culture of the age must have suffered from the want of it. In course of time, however, a rival to the monastery arose in the university. Italy took the lead with her University of Bologna, but in the twelfth century the schools of France were the most important, and the mutual collision of the young minds which resorted to them, apart from the special knowledge acquired, must have done much to liberate the long enslaved intellect of the Western world. England was behindhand, but about 1136 we find JOHN OF SALISBURY, author of standard works on statesmanship and logic, and perhaps the nearest approach to the character of a genuine man of letters that the age produced, studying at Paris and Chartres. A little later the Italian scholar Vacarius visits Oxford to lecture on law, but is impeded by the king; about 1170 another Italian, Irnerius, mighty in the newly-retrieved Pandects, holds at Oxford what is hardly distinguishable from a professor's chair. Still there is no university, properly speaking, but Oxford and Cambridge struggle gradually into corporate existence, and the former at least may, as a national institution, be deemed contemporary with Magna Charta (1215). This is a great step towards the emancipation of thought, and the rather as it coincides with a similar movement throughout the Continent, and inasmuch as the holders of high office in the Church are for the future most commonly university students, who come to their dignities imbued with academical ideals and traditions. Of these the most remarkable was ROBERT GROSSETESTE, the patriotic and anti-Italian Bishop of Lincoln (1175?-1253), who, having been Chancellor of Oxford, stood stoutly by the students throughout his stormy episcopal career, helping them out of scrapes and obtaining for them new privileges. Grosseteste, like John of Salisbury, nearly approaches the modern character of a man of letters, much of his voluminous work having no special professional imprint, but being undertaken for the pure love and sole sake of

*The Uni-  
versities*

culture. This is even more conspicuously the case with a yet more famous Oxonian, who makes no pretension to rank among men of letters, ROGER BACON (1214-1292.) Roger did not possess, or could find no field to employ, the literary genius of his more celebrated namesake, but seems to have had an equally firm hold upon the capital truth that knowledge comes of observation.

*Amalgama-  
tion of the  
Norman with  
the Saxon  
race*

Towards the close of the fourteenth century the apparent amalgamation of Norman and Saxon was put to a rude test. A large proportion of the peasantry of the southern counties, goaded into revolt by oppression, rose against the aristocracy and the representatives of legal authority, and spread fire and pillage over the land. These men were almost all of Saxon descent. Had any race hatred survived, their animosity would have been directed against the Normans in particular, but of this there is no sign. Their enemies are the rich and powerful of whatever extraction. There are no longer Normans or Saxons, only Englishmen. They kill the Flemings indeed, but the Flemings are accounted foreigners. The two literatures stand on the brink of a similar amalgamation. The foreign speech has died out as a distinct language, but the foreign forms and ideals of which it was the vehicle remain, and will dominate English literature for the future. On the other hand, the plain robust vernacular of England, after exhibiting numerous dialectical variations, has at length won its way to a diction accepted by all south of the Tweed as the pure standard of English, yet needing a greatly enriched vocabulary, which, the power of evoking new words having departed from it, is obtainable only by recourse to French and Latin. This needful appropriation had already gone far; it was to go still farther, and to be in a manner consecrated by the example of the only writer of great literary genius that England had yet produced. In our next chapter we shall trace the confluence of the Norman and the Saxon literary currents in Geoffrey Chaucer, who not merely summed up in himself the literary influences already existing in his country, but brought in a new and important factor from another foreign literature, the youngest of any, and yet the only one that could claim to rank as classical—the literature of Italy.



## CHAPTER V

### CHAUCEUR

WE have thus far accompanied English literature through many phases of immaturity as the literature of a nation, and have reached the point where it first shows symptoms of becoming a chief literature of the world. The productions we have hitherto considered possess a deep national and historical interest for the Briton, and deserve, as they have received, the closest attention from foreign scholars and philologists. They have contained, however, little that natives, and much less that foreigners, would read for the mere pleasure of perusal, apart from the subsidiary aims of information, linguistic research, or insight into the national character. The power of delighting for its own sake is the true test of literary merit, and rarely until the latter part of the fourteenth century is an English book able to sustain it. The appearance of Chaucer marks the admission of the English to rank among the literatures destined and deserving to be known beyond their national limits, and to influence the literature of foreign countries. The formal recognition of this eminence was, indeed, to be delayed for centuries, but no well-informed Frenchman or Italian or German now disputes that England took rank among the foremost literary countries when she produced GEOFFREY CHAUCER.

Her intellectual reputation, indeed, already stood high. John of Salisbury, Grosseteste, Roger Bacon, were probably as greatly esteemed abroad as any foreign writers in their respective departments. Oxford and Cambridge, if not so influential as the more favourably situated University of Paris, were still renowned and visited from afar. But no Englishman had gained a great name in elegant letters, and it was hardly possible that he should. As we have seen, our language consisted of two elements which must coalesce to make a fit vehicle for literature, and whose fusion must be a work of time. On one side the speech of Saxondom, the massive groundwork of the language, but which had lost the power of self-development, and could only enrich its inadequate vocabulary by appropriations from a foreign source; on the other this source itself, the Norman French, adequate for most literary needs, but which, without aid from the Saxon, could no more become national than without its aid the Saxon could become copious. The assimilation so essential to both had long been progressing, and the period of complete fusion was

*Chaucer a  
personification  
of the union of  
races and lan-  
guages in  
England*

happily signalised by the birth of a poet not merely competent to use the newly moulded instrument as a language, but to enrich language by trophies won from foreign literature, and not only a poet and a scholar, but such an observer of human nature, such a depicter of characters and creator of types as no

modern country but Italy had yet seen. All the chief elements both of the Anglo-Saxon and the Anglo-Norman characters which we have endeavoured to describe were represented in Chaucer's opulent nature, and the union of the races and the literatures was personified in him.



**Edward III**

*From the bronze effigy in Westminster Abbey*

*Chaucer's  
family and  
youthful  
history*

**Geoffrey Chaucer** was probably born about 1340—the year before the formal recognition of literature as a matter of public concern by the coronation of Petrarch in the Capitol, and three years after the preferring of Edward III.'s claim to the crown of France, a step in itself neither just nor politic, but contributing more than anything else to make Saxon and Norman feel as one under the influence of a common cause and a common glory. In 1340 Edward for the first time assumed the title of King of France and quartered the French arms; and 1340 beheld the first considerable English naval victory; if it also saw the birth of the first English poet of European fame, it was indeed an epoch-making year.

Chaucer's father, John Chaucer, the son of one Robert Chaucer, who had been a collector of customs, was a vintner who also at one time held an appointment as deputy collector at Southampton, and must have been a man of substance, as in 1366 he is

found disposing of a considerable property in Aldgate. He lived in Thames Street at the foot of Dowgate Hill, where, in all probability, the poet was born. The name connected with the French *chaussier*, a shoemaker, as Fletcher is with *fletcher*, but like this, far from implying French descent, was not uncommon at the time. A derivation from *chaffuecure* = *chaffwax*, or melter of wax for use in official documents, seems less probable. The family belonged to the Eastern counties, having property at Ipswich, and, as John Chaucer used armorial bearings, must have had pretensions to

gentle blood. John Chaucer is found in attendance upon Edward III. in his expedition to Flanders in 1338. This connection with the court might help him to obtain for his son a page's place in the household of Prince Lionel, Edward's third son, to which some fragments of an account-book discovered by Sir Edward Bond prove him to have belonged in 1357. In 1359 Chaucer took part in Edward's invasion of France, was made prisoner, and was ransomed by the King in March 1360. If the money came out of Edward's treasury, some value must have been attached to Chaucer's services. He soon afterwards, possibly upon occasion of his patron Lionel becoming in 1361 Viceroy of Ireland, whither Chaucer certainly did not accompany him, entered the King's household as "valettus" or yeoman of the chamber, and in 1367 is found receiving a special pension in addition to his salary. It seems reasonable to connect this grant with his marriage to Philippa, described as Philippa Chaucer in a list of the Queen's ladies in 1366. She may have been a kinswoman, but was more probably his wife, as he certainly was married to a lady named Philippa by 1374. Of her supposed connection with the Roos family we shall speak later. From the general tenour of his writings it must be feared that as a husband he was neither very constant nor very happy.

In November 1372 an event occurred which had the greatest influence on the development of Chaucer's genius. This was a mission on which he was despatched to Italy, along with two Genoese merchants, to treat respecting the formation of a Genoese commercial establishment in England. His selection for such a commission shows that he must have been regarded as a competent man of business, and almost justifies the supposition that he was then acquainted with Italian, and already possessed some knowledge of Italy. Considering that his first master, Lionel, Duke of Clarence, had in 1367 married Violante, daughter of Galeazzo Visconti, Duke of Milan, it would appear highly probable that Chaucer had been brought into contact with Italians, and it would be in no respect surprising if he had formed one of the brilliant train which accompanied Lionel to Italy on occasion of his marriage. If this was the case, Chaucer may probably have met Petrarch, who is related to have been among the wedding guests, though the statement has been doubted from its not being confirmed by his own authority. If Chaucer was not already interested in Italian literature, he speedily became so. The Clerk of Oxford, who narrates the story of Griselda in *The Canterbury Tales*, says that he got it from "a worthy clerk at Padowe,"

*His mission  
in Italy*

Fraunceys Petrark, the laureate poete,

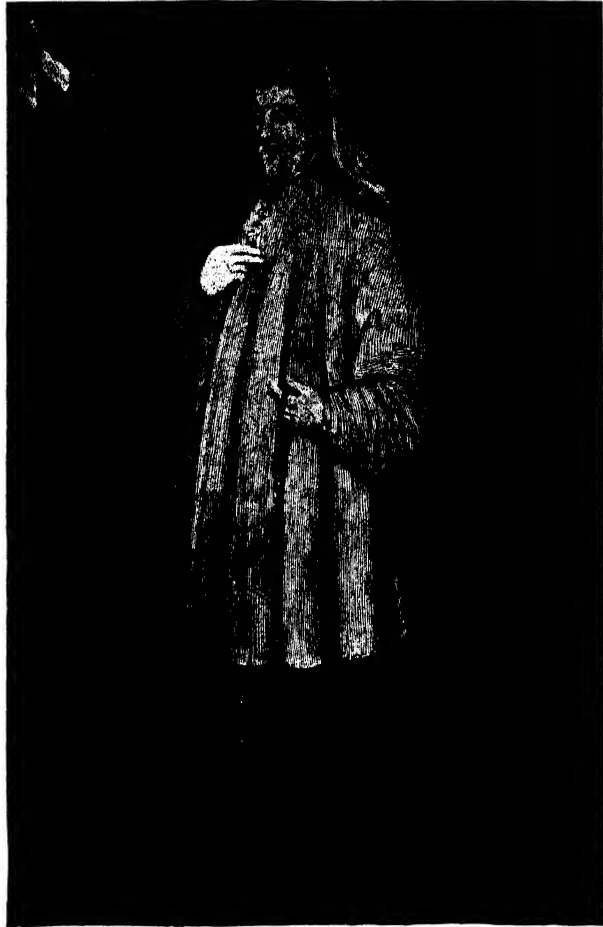
and in fact it is mainly a rendering from Petrarch's version.

In 1373, the year when Chaucer was in Italy, Petrarch translated the story into Latin from Boccaccio's *Decameron*, and sent the translation to Boccaccio, who then lived at Certaldo, near Florence, which city, as appears from an order for the payment of his expenses, Chaucer also visited upon the King's business. He would be very likely to make the acquaintance of Boccaccio, and may have seen the manuscript in his hands. If he had already met Petrarch at Prince Lionel's wedding, it is not impossible that he may have journeyed farther to visit him at Padua or Arquà, though the disturbed state of Italy might create difficulties which would not impede his meeting with Boccaccio. In any case Chaucer opens the list of illustrious English poets who have been deeply influenced by Italy. Few men of genius have had more in common than he and Boccaccio.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Landor introduces Chaucer into the company of Petrarch and Boccaccio in one of his *Imaginary Conversations*, but, being under a wrong impression as to the English poet's age, sets chronology at defiance.

*His various  
fortune*

Chaucer's discharge of his mission must have given satisfaction, for after his return in the autumn of 1373 we find him in continual receipt of tokens of the royal benevolence. The most important is his appointment as comptroller of the customs duties on wools, skins, and leathers in the port of London; the most curious is the allotment for his consumption of a pitcher of wine a day, afterwards commuted into a pension of twenty marks. Both these were bestowed in 1374, in which year also he



**Geoffrey Chaucer**

*From the portrait in the National Portrait Gallery*

entered on the leasehold occupation of the dwelling-house over Aldgate Gate, where he dwelt for twelve years. In 1376 and the three years following he is employed on a variety of foreign missions; one to Milan, which strengthens the probability that Lombardy was not strange to him. In 1380 he seems to have been concerned in some mysterious proceedings connected with the abduction of a lady; at all events, a document exists by which Cecilia Chaumpaigne discharges Galfridus Chaucer from all legal proceedings, "whether on account of my carrying off (*raptu*) or any other causes which I have or may have had from the beginning of the world until this

present." The matter is entirely obscure; it can only be affirmed that it entailed no loss of character upon Chaucer, for in 1382 he was appointed to another comptroller-ship, and in 1386 was elected knight of the shire for Kent. But at the end of the year he was suddenly deprived of both his comptrollerships. The romantic stories of the old biographers of his flight to Zealand, his return and imprisonment, and his ultimate release at the instance of Anne of Bohemia, are refuted by the fact that, until (1388)



Chaucer's Grave in Westminster Abbey

compelled by his necessities to assign his pension to another, he continued to draw it regularly and give receipts in person. His dismissal was, no doubt, connected with the proceedings of a commission appointed in November 1386 to search out abuses in the revenue departments. Such inquiries easily find what they desire to find, and it can hardly be doubted that pretexts would be sought for removing the actual incumbents to make room for the favourites of King Richard's turbulent uncle, the Duke of Gloucester, who had just gained power by a revolution. That abuses did exist may well be believed. Chaucer, as we shall see, had been busy writing poetry between 1372 and 1386, and had recently obtained leave to perform his official duties by deputy.

On King Richard's regaining his authority in 1389, Chaucer, though not reappointed

to his old places, received a new one of importance, that of clerk of the works at the palace of Westminster and several other royal residences. This, too, he was permitted to discharge by deputy, but the deputy must have needed supervision almost as much as the duties, and Chaucer can have been little fitted to control either. Within two years he lost his office, the fall being broken in some measure by his appointment as forester in Somersetshire (if, indeed, the Geoffrey Chaucer on whom the post was conferred be rightly identified with the poet), and by a pension of £20 from the King. His frequent requests at this time for an advance on his pension seem to indicate much pecuniary difficulty, and he must have apprehended being harassed with lawsuits, since he obtained exemption from all civil proceedings against him for two years. Richard, a liberal monarch, but too profuse to be always bountiful in the right place, did no more for him; but Henry IV., within four days after his accession, mindful of Chaucer's special devotion to the House of Lancaster, and moved by an appeal from the poet, more than doubled his pension, and by the end of the year Chaucer, restored to the prospect of comfort, takes a long lease of a house in the garden of the Lady Chapel, Westminster, where Henry VII.'s chapel now stands. In the following February he receives his old pension, but the next payment is made to an official on his behalf, and the inference must be that he had already begun to suffer from mortal disease. According to the inscription on his tomb (not erected, however, until 1555) he died on October 25, 1400. All know his sepulchre in Westminster Abbey.

Chaucer's wife is believed to have died about 1387. The question about her origin is mixed up with the further question, whether Thomas Chaucer, chief butler to Richard II. and Henry IV., and several times Speaker of the House of Commons, was the poet's son. His tomb bears the arms of the family of Roet, to which belonged Catherine Swinford, long the mistress and ultimately the wife of John of Gaunt: it is thought that these must have been his mother's arms, and that Chaucer's favour with John of Gaunt would be explained by his wife's relationship to Catherine Swinford. It further appears that he used a seal engraved with the arms which appear on Chaucer's tomb in Westminster Abbey. But these were *not* the arms of Chaucer's father, and as the tomb was not erected until 1555, it is highly probable that they were merely carved because they were known to be the arms of Thomas Chaucer. If Thomas was Chaucer's son, it is to be feared that he was an unnatural one, for the period of his rise into fortune through a wealthy marriage and a lucrative office corresponds with that of Geoffrey Chaucer's sorest pecuniary troubles, which there is no hint of Thomas having relieved. In fact, notwithstanding the weighty testimony of Gascoigne, brought to light by Professor Hales, the identification seems as yet insufficiently supported, and the case for it is further weakened by the absence of any allusion to Thomas Chaucer in the elder Chaucer's writings. He does acknowledge a son Lewis, perhaps a natural son, since he was only ten in 1391, or possibly in 1393, when Chaucer composed his treatise on the astrolabe for his use. Mr. Edward Scott's interesting discovery that Thomas Chaucer succeeded as occupant of Chaucer's house almost proves that he was a near relative, but not that he was his son.

Chaucer is neither a Homer nor a Dante, but his position in regard to English literature is analogous to that which they occupy towards the literature of their respective countries. Each was the first poet of his nation, not indeed the first who had ever written poetry, but the first who had so written poetry as to command the attention of contemporaries and of posterity. As Mahomet professed of himself, they divide an age of light from an age of comparative ignorance. Each, moreover, is

How he þ' suauert Was mayden marie  
And lat his lone flour and frutifie

**W**al yow þis hyfe be queyut ye resemblaunce  
Of him har in me so fressh hyffynesse  
pat to pntte othir men in remembraunce  
Of his psoner haue heere his lyfnesse  
Do make to yis ende in oothfastnesse  
pat yei þ' haue of him lest yowght & mynde  
By yis peynture may aseyen him fynde

**T**he ymages þ' in þ' chirche been  
waken folk yenke on god & on his seyntes  
Whan ye ymages yei be holden & seen  
Were oft on syte of hem causich restreyntes  
Of yowghtes gode Whan a ying deceptur is  
Or entuled if men take of re heede  
Thoght of ye lyfnesse to Wil in hym breede

**A**ynt oome holden appryuon and sey  
pat none ymages schuld & makes be  
yei erren soule & goon out of ye wey  
of trouth haue yei stant sensibillite  
wasse od þ' now blessed cruntes  
wpon my maistres soule may haue  
for him lady eke þ' may & create

**Y**ow othir ying wolk & fayne speke & touche  
Beere in yis booke bitt othir is my entusse  
fre þ' al word and enny is my pouche  
pat al my lyf is quere & hemouss  
And hene spure commandith sturss



Portrait of Chaucer from Thomas Hoccleve's Poem "De Regimine Principum,"  
Early XVth Century.

[Harleian MS. 4866, British Museum.]





thoroughly national. Homer, so far as we can pierce the obscurity surrounding his personality, appears as the typical Greek, Dante is an Italian of the Italians, Chaucer is to the core an Englishman. The great distinction between Chaucer and the poets of the very highest rank, and the chief cause of his inferiority to these, is his lack of originality. If, as is probable, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are combined out of more ancient ballads, the combiner at all events stamped his own individuality upon them as vividly as Shakespeare stamped his upon the historical materials which he derived from the old English chronicles. Dante is the most intensely original of all poets. But Chaucer imitates and translates. One of his most important works is an adaptation from the Italian, another is a translation from the French. Without French and Italian examples he would have achieved comparatively little. His place, therefore, is not with the supreme poets, but rather with the Virgils and Ovids who, discarding the old Latin forms as Chaucer discarded the alliterative metres, and imbuing themselves with the spirit of Greek literature as he imbued himself with French and Italian, produced a literature derivative indeed, but hardly less important than its original. In both cases this lay in the nature of things. Rome was to govern the world, and her literature could not be widely separated from that which had permeated the life and moulded the civilisation of the great majority of her subjects. If Chaucer's receptiveness impaired his independence, it made him more truly a representative of that fusion of elements originally conflicting, English literature.

Like most great English writers, Chaucer belonged to the middle class, and hence was advantageously placed for interpreting the higher and lower orders to each other. Like Shakespeare, he was well acquainted with the life of the inferior classes, beheld it with genial condescension, entered into its humours with genuine enjoyment, but preferred the more aristocratic society to which fortune and his abilities had introduced him. One plain reason is that both Chaucer and Shakespeare wrote in the main for cultivated audiences. The great success of Langland's *Piers Plowman* shows that even in that age a poet might find a public among the humbler orders of his countrymen; but, to emulate Langland, Chaucer must have renounced all the departments of poetry for which he felt the most especial vocation. We hence find him the self-conscious laureate of a courtly circle. As Professor Minto remarks, the idea of chivalrous love is always present with him, and even in *The Canterbury Tales*, where the machinery compels him to represent the humours of every order of society, he is careful to demarcate the gentles from the plebeians, and apologises to the former for the despite which realism occasionally compels him to offer to refinement. This gives Chaucer a highly interesting position, and justifies a comparison in one respect between him and a very dissimilar poet, Dante. As Dante has embodied mediæval ideals in the regions of theology and philosophy for us at the moment when they had obtained most apparent consistency, but also at the moment when they were at the point of passing away, so Chaucer has embodied chivalry in the age of its greatest splendour, the age of Edward III., just as the invention of gunpowder and the growing power of the mercantile class were about to bring it down. Like Dante, then, Chaucer both closes and opens an era; and, although the father of modern English poetry, he is not, like his great contemporary Petrarch, a modern man.

We are warranted in regarding Chaucer's character in a most favourable light. The little that could possibly be brought against him is so obscure that it might entirely disappear in presence of more accurate knowledge. We seem to perceive dimly some traces of unsatisfactory relations with his wife, without being able to fix blame on either

*His chari*

party. The affair of Cecilia Champaigne is mysterious; it may have been a money matter; all we know for certain is that the lady thought she had good reasons for taking legal proceedings, and still better reasons for dropping them. It might even be doubted whether the Chaucer of this episode was our Chaucer, though the identity seems to be confirmed by the weight and rank of the persons who appear as witnesses. It is nevertheless worth remarking that if, as we are disposed to think, Thomas Chaucer, the chief butler, was not the son of the poet, there must have been another family of the name of Chaucer of consideration at the time, and that Geoffrey was a common christian-name. For the rest, we know Chaucer principally from the hints and glimpses he affords of himself, and the light which his own descriptions of man and nature afford as to his habitual way of looking upon the world. The most conspicuous trait is a devotion to study, combined, nevertheless, with other characteristics not always prominent in a scholar—aptitude for courts, fondness for external nature, and shrewd observation of mankind. He seems to have known how to retain the favour of his patrons, and must have possessed some diplomatic tact to have been employed upon so many confidential missions. If he failed as an official the reason may well have been that his functions rendered him responsible for the keeping of complicated accounts, the last thing to be expected from a poet. His love of scenery and outdoor life is fully apparent from his writings, and we have his own testimony that when Nature put on her best dress she could woo him away even from his books:

There is game none  
That fro my bokis maketh me to gone,  
But it be seldome, on the holyday;  
Save certainly when that the month of Maye  
Is comen, and I here the foulis syng,  
And that the flouris ginnen for to sprynge,  
Farewell my boke and my devocion.

But, though he must have enjoyed the spectacle of a tournament, there is no trace of any addiction to rough and violent sports. As an observer of men and manners, Chaucer is equally delightful for his shrewdness and his sympathetic charity. He is at home with every one, and has a kindly word for all. He views the world as a humorist, but not as a jester; he is never frivolous and seldom sarcastic; he notes faults and foibles, but looks on everything a little more favourably than it quite deserves. On the whole, a man in whom Shakespeare would have delighted, and one who could only have gained in proportion as he was known. Intellectually he is of his age, and yet beyond his age; a humanist without pedantry, a man of the type of Petrarch, Erasmus, and Boccaccio, but especially Boccaccio.

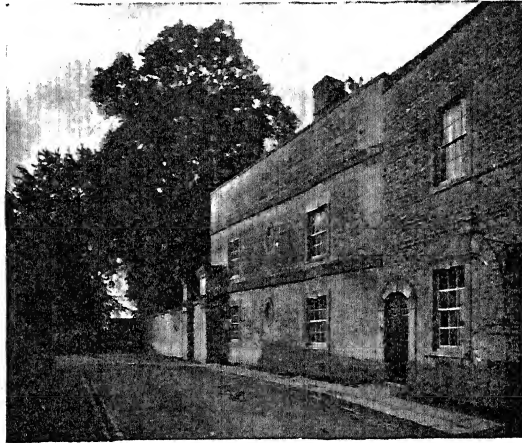
It will now be desirable to state the probable chronological order and approximate dates of Chaucer's genuine works, which are nearly as follows.

*Chaucer's  
early writings*

The earliest extant is *The Book of the Duchess*, which had probably been preceded by a translation of Guillaume de Machault's *History of the Lion*, now lost. The *Book* is shown by internal evidence to be an elegy on Blanche, Duchess of Lancaster, the first wife of John of Gaunt, who died in September 1369, which must consequently be the date of the poem. On a comparison between this and the genuine portion of the translation of *The Romaunt of the Rose*, the latter, as the better poem, would seem to be the more recent.

About 1369 Chaucer was under the influence of the French poets, whose metres were commonly octosyllabic. It was not until his visit to Italy in 1372-1373 that the genius of Italian poetry captivated him, and that he began to form his works upon Italian models. It is true that he did not even then discard the octosyllabic line, but it may well be doubted if he would then have ventured upon so extensive an undertaking as the rendering of the entire *Roman de la Rose* in it. His version, accordingly, of which but a portion remains, may be placed with probability between 1369 and 1372.

The *Complaint unto Pity* was probably written about this time, although the great innovation which distinguishes it, the introduction of the "rime royal" or seven-lined stanza employed in our own day with such effect by William Morris, might seem to denote a date after Chaucer's visit to Italy. But even if he had not, as may be suspected, already accompanied Prince Lionel on his nuptial expedition in 1367, the stir which the event would occasion in court circles would be likely to induce a courtier with a gift



House at Woodstock occupied, according to tradition, by Chaucer

for poetry to interest himself in the Italian language and literature, and his studies would not proceed far without convincing him how much English metre needed improvement. There is, indeed, no token of the slightest obligation on his part to any English poetical predecessor, except as affording him a theme for parody. Although the "rime royal," adopted by him from Guillaume de Machault, but made completely his own by the frequency of his use, being simply the Italian octave deprived of its sixth line, wants the symmetrical balance of its model, it may be questioned whether the modification does not adapt it even better to the purposes of narrative poetry. It is a pleasing and by no means unlikely conjecture that Chaucer's yearning for Italy, whether previously visited by him or not, may have led him to be despatched on his errand of 1372, when the length of his stay seems to prove that he must have had other concerns to occupy him than the affairs of the Genoese merchants.

The date, and even the authenticity, of Chaucer's translation of the *Roman de la Rose* are questions of some difficulty. That he did translate it we know from his own statement in *The Legend of Good Women*, written about 1385. Three extensive fragments, attributed to him in the MSS., have come down to us. The genuineness of all has been questioned, on the ground of a difference in dialect from that of his other writings, and of a discrepancy from the ordinary pattern of his rhymes. Professor Skeat, our highest modern

His translation of the "Roman de la Rose"

authority, is so much inclined to lay stress on this kind of evidence that we may accept his opinion that it does not apply to the first of these fragments, comprising lines 1-1705. It may be added that the poetry is here better than that of the other portions, possessing a certain aroma difficult to characterise, but perceptibly absent from the latter part of the poem. This might certainly be accounted for on the supposition that Chaucer was becoming tired of his long labour, but, taken in connection with the philological and metrical tests, seems sufficient to establish a case against the authenticity of the suspected passages. The merit of the genuine portion is such as to render it hard to ascribe this to any one but Chaucer, and suggests that it must have been written after *The Book of the Duchess*, while it would seem to be unaffected by the Italian influences which pervaded Chaucer's work after his visit to Italy in 1372-73. It may have been commenced shortly before this mission, interrupted by it, and completed by another hand. From Chaucer's way of speaking of it, it would seem to have been published as his work, whether entirely from his hand or not.

Other narrative poems

If *The Romaunt of the Rose* was not the first work which occupied Chaucer after his return from Italy, he probably then employed himself upon another unfinished poem, *The House of Fame*. Like the *Romaunt*, this is written in octosyllabic couplets, a form with which, as the work proceeds, the writer appears to express some dissatisfaction, which may have prevented him from completing it. It seems, at all events, unlikely that he would have recurred to this inferior form after his success in handling his own invention, the "rime royal." *Troilus and Cryseide*, the most important of his works after *The Canterbury Tales*, is, to the extent of about a third, adapted from the *Filosofo*, the poem which Boccaccio had written in his youth to impeach the inconstancy of his mistress. It seems probable that something in Chaucer's own situation rendered this subject congenial to him. The poem also contains clear indications of influence from Dante and Petrarch, and from Boccaccio's other epic, *La Teseide*. This latter work is the basis of another and even more celebrated poem of Chaucer's, the *Palamon and Arcite*, which, as *The Knight's Tale* occupies in every sense the first place among *The Canterbury Tales*. The original form and date of this poem are subjects of controversy. Chaucer tells us in his *Legend of Good Women* (1385) that he had already written

al the love of Palamon and Arcyte  
Of Thebes, though the story is knowen lyte.

This would accord with the existence of some fragments of what would seem to be an earlier version. The curious circumstance is that these fragments are written in "rime royal," while *The Knight's Tale* as we have it is in heroic verse. Did Chaucer keep back his poem from dissatisfaction with the metrical effect, or because it was a mere translation of the *Teseide*, and after 1385 take the trouble of completely rewriting it? or had he discarded the stanza-form at an early period and already recast the poem in heroic rhyme? and was this with the intention of inserting it in a collection of metrical tales



# TROILUS AND CRISEYDE. LIBER SECUNDUS. ~~1522~~ 1522

Incipit prohemium Secundi Libri.

Of desespere that Troilus was inne:  
But now of hope the calendes biginne.



OF THESE BLAKE WAMES FOR TO  
sayle.

O wind, O wind, the weder ginneth clere;  
for in this see the boot hath swich travayle,  
Of my conning that unnethes I it stere:  
This see clepe I the tempestuous matere

O lady myn, that called art Cleo,  
Thou be my speed fro this forth, & my muse,  
To ryme wel this book, til I have do:  
Me nedeth here noon other art to use.  
for why to every lover I me excuse,  
That of no sentement I this endyte,  
But out of Latin in my tonge it wryte.

Wherfore I nil have neither thank ne blame  
Of al this werk, but pray yow mekely,  
Disblameth me, if any word be lame,  
for as myn auctor seyde, so seye I.  
Eek though I speche of love unflingly,  
No wonder is, for it nothing of newe is;  
A blind man can nat juggen wel in hewis.

Ye knowe eek, that in forme of speche is  
chaunge  
Withinne a thousand yeer, and wordes tho  
That hadden prys, now wonder nyce and  
straunge  
Us thinketh hem; and yet they spake hem so,  
And spedde as wel in love as men now do;

which he had planned already? The question can hardly be decided; but upon the whole we are inclined to think that Chaucer wrote *Palamon and Arcite* in "rime royal" some time between his two Italian visits, and recast it between 1381 and 1385; if we could believe that the plan of *The Canterbury Tales* was formed before 1385 the circumstance would be of the highest interest. It appears certain that the *Second Nun's Tale* (St. Cecilia), *The Clerk's Tale* (Griselda), and *The Man of Law's Tale* (Custance), were written before the framework of the Canterbury pilgrimage was devised. All these are in stanzas, and it would be very natural that *Palamon and Arcite* should follow in the same metre, and be recast upon Chaucer's discovering that heroic rhyme was more suitable to the subject. In this case we might place the design of a series of narrative poems to be fitted into some framework, whether that of a pilgrimage or not, between 1381, when *The Parliament of Fowls* was certainly composed, and 1385, the equally certain date of *The Legend of Good Women*. In the latter poem we see the heroic couplet established as Chaucer's favourite metre, and the clear emergence from his Anglo-Italian into his thoroughly English manner.

*Troilus and Cryseide*, the flower of the Anglo-Italian period, apparently comes between two poems of importance, both in the seven-line stanza, whose dates are indicated by internal evidence. The former, *The Complaint of Mars*, written at the prompting of John of Gaunt, is probably an allegory, partly mythological, partly astronomical, of certain transactions of a scandalous character which amused the court in 1379. The latter, *The Parliament of Fowls*, is an allegory on the marriage of Richard II. to Anne of Bohemia, which was solemnised early in 1382. Another work of the same period deserves much attention both as a landmark of English prose and an indication of the disposition to serious study and reflection which prevailed more and more with Chaucer as he advanced in years. This is his translation of Boethius, an author memorable in English literature for the illustrious rank of his translators—King Alfred, Chaucer, and Queen Elizabeth. Chaucer here labours purely as a moralist and philosopher. It was not the interspersed lyrics which attracted him, since he renders these in prose. The diligence of Professor Skeat has retrieved the very manuscript he worked upon, which is accompanied by a gloss which has had considerable influence upon his translation.

We have seen that *The House of Fame* was probably begun before the metrical tales. There seems internal evidence of its having been laid aside and resumed, the poet making a new invocation at the commencement of the unfinished third part. This was probably written in 1383 and 1384, but never completed. Tired with the subject, or feeling the loose ("lewd," he calls it) metre an insuperable obstacle to the perfection he coveted, Chaucer in 1385 forsook his poem for *The Legend of Good Women*. A good reason for this undertaking may be found in his desire to recommend himself to Queen Anne; according, indeed, to Lydgate's statement, it was embarked upon at her request. It was intended to have consisted of nineteen stories, only nine of which were

written. The most probable cause of its discontinuance is the heavy misfortune which befell Chaucer at the end of 1386, when the loss of his employment would entail his banishment from court, and the interruption of his relations with the King and Queen, little as they had been personally concerned in his downfall. It may also well be that he was already tiring of his task, and he may have felt misgivings of his power to represent Queen Anne in the character of Alcestris, which appears to have been his intention. Chaucer does not seem to have been one of those poets who, like Spenser and Milton, can undertake great poems with a full assurance of unabated inspiration, life and health vouchsafed, sufficient to carry them to the end. Of all his more important works, *Troilus and Cryseide* is the only one completed, and here he had much aid from Boccaccio.

If Chaucer was somewhat deficient in perseverance, he gave proof of great elasticity of spirit when, shortly after his dismissal from office and the relinquishment of *The Legend of Good Women*, he began to execute the framework of his *Canterbury Tales*. The researches of Professor Skeat leave little doubt that the year in which the pilgrimage is supposed to take place is 1387. It does not necessarily follow that the immortal Prologue was written in that year, but Professor Hales has shown, from an allusion to Middelburg as the seat of wool stapling, that it cannot be later than 1388. Several of the tales, as we have seen, probably existed as independent compositions, but even in that case enough remained to be done to render the years following Chaucer's disgrace the most memorable of his life. How long they occupied him it is impossible to say, but the original plan was not fully carried out, and may have been interrupted by the trials consequent upon the loss of his office, as clerk of the works to the royal palaces, in 1391. His pecuniary situation, as we have seen, was then a very trying one, and his was not an age in which an author could write himself out of debt like Sir Walter Scott. He must, moreover, have turned aside for a time from his poetical labour to write the learned treatise on the *Astrolabe* (also unfinished) addressed to his son in 1391; or, as we are rather disposed to think, in 1393, as he mentions the incidence of March 13 on a Saturday, which agrees with that year.

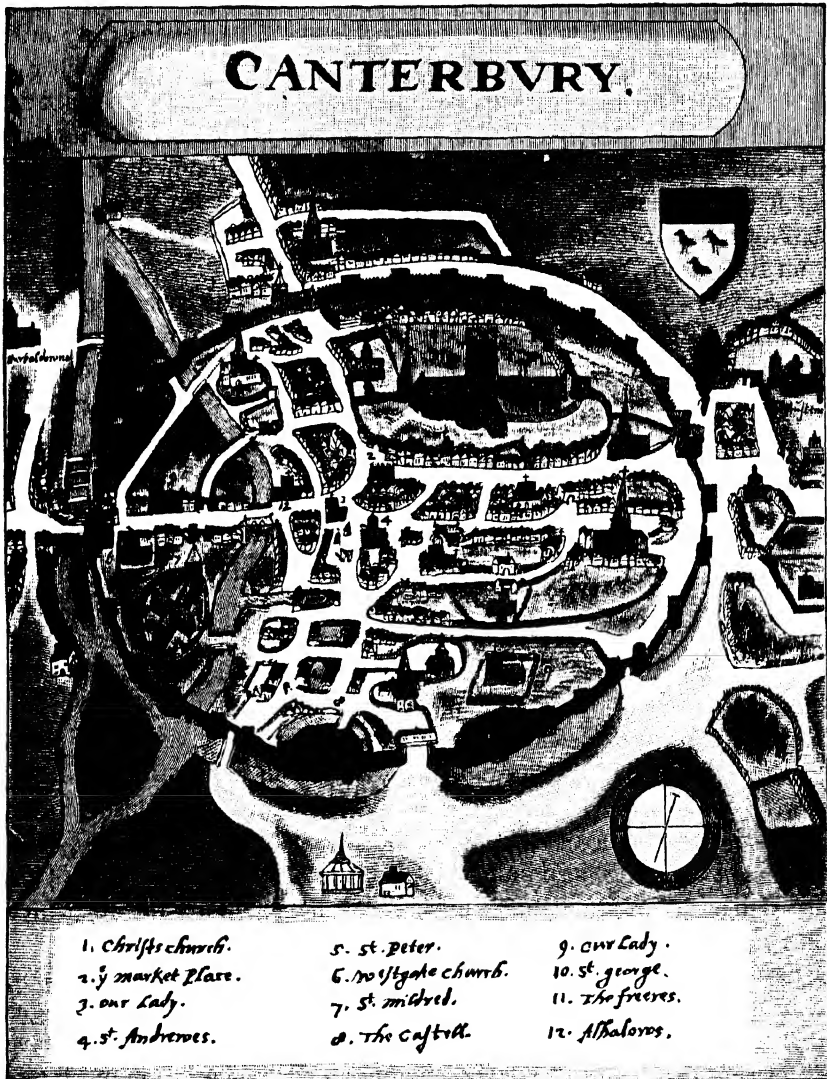
Date of the  
"Canterbury  
Tales"

Before passing to a more particular analysis of Chaucer's principal poems, it will be desirable to say something respecting the peculiarities of his language. His dialect is in general the South-east Midland, now become the established speech of educated England. His diction has a copious infusion of words derived from the French, absolutely essential to the poet who would represent the life of courts and camps, and indeed to any poet who would bestow freedom and elasticity upon his metre. The true Saxon speech of his day was not only too scanty for the vocabulary of a poet taking so wide a range as Chaucer, but was too monosyllabic for flexible and sonorous poetry. Chaucer, unlike Spenser, shows moderation and good taste in his verbal mintage, and his Gallic is not more obsolete than his Saxon diction. In truth, he is far less formidable than he seems at first. His obscurities are easily remedied by a glossary, though, while the student of Middle English might protest, the reader for poetical

Chaucer's  
language and  
metre



pleasure would be helped by an edition which, without absolutely modernising him, should offer a compromise between the orthography of the fourteenth century and that of our day. His metre presents little difficulty to the reader



Plan of Canterbury in the Fifteenth Century

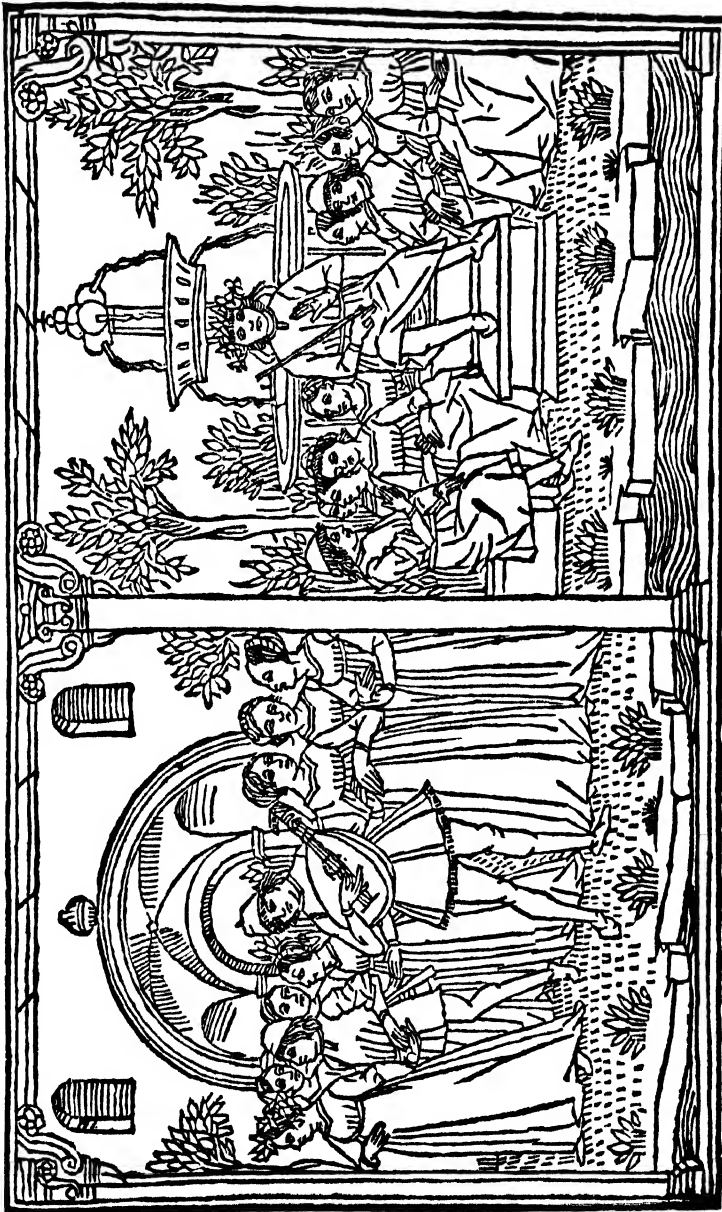
*From a MS. in the British Museum*

who remembers the capital rule that an *e* final or preceding a final consonant is almost invariably sounded as a distinct syllable, unless elided before another vowel. Thus, *sharpes speres stronge*, which make only three syllables in modern English, are six in Chaucer. Other needful rules are compendiously given in Professor Skeat's preface to the Oxford Chaucer. Of Chaucer's poetical forms we have already spoken, his great and undying services in this department



are to have been the virtual creator for Britain of the "rime royal" and the decasyllabic heroic couplet.

In treating of Chaucer as a poet it is natural to begin with the work by which *The "Canterbury Tales"*



The Narrators of the Tale.

From the "Decamerone," 1492.

The Procession to the Garden.

he chiefly lives in men's memories. This is beyond question *The Canterbury Tales*, not that any immense gap yawns between it and some of the rest as regards poetical merit; but because the merit of the larger and more characteristic part is of a kind which he has not displayed elsewhere. In it and it only he

has no competitors; here he enters a new way, and is as regards his own country entirely original, while at the same time, taking his country as his theme, he becomes her first national poet. This character does not so much apply to the tales themselves, admirable as most of them are, as to the framework in which they are set, the Prologue with the masterly portraits of the personages, and the little bits of conversation and description interspersed between the tales. A certain resemblance to the *Decameron* of Boccaccio is immediately apparent. Each set of tales is put into the mouths of a company brought together by casualty, who employ themselves in telling stories to pass the time. It may even be said that Boccaccio's machinery works more smoothly than Chaucer's. It is easier to imagine tale-telling to a courtly group reclined amid the bowery shades of an Italian garden than to a bevy of pilgrims jogging abreast, as they should have done if every one was to hear, but seem to have neglected to do, since we are told that the Reeve "ever rode the hyndrest of our route." But the comparative awkwardness of the *mise en scène* is amply redeemed by the scope which it affords for the delineation of character. Boccaccio's personages associate by choice, and naturally belong to the same order of society. Chaucer's are actuated by the general instinct of devotion which, combined with conventional prescription and the equally universal love of holiday-making, affects every order of society alike, and each has its representative among them. Boccaccio, consequently, has not discriminated his characters, nor could he have done so unless he had made them the *dramatis personæ* instead of the narrators of his stories. Chaucer, giving to each personage a distinct profession, compelled himself to depict and individualise him, and this proved to be precisely where his best strength lay. Great as were his gifts of humour and pathos, they were less exceptional than his gift of delineation; and what he was among poets his country was among nations. *Excudent alii spirantia mollius aera*. English literature has always been less distinguished by refinement of art than by fidelity to life.

Plan of "The  
Canterbury  
Tales"

It must be needless to recite the universally known machinery of *The Canterbury Tales*, the meeting of a party of thirty pilgrims at the Tabard Inn at Southwark, and the arrangement made under the Host's auspices that each shall tell four tales—two on their journey to Canterbury and two on their return. This would have provided no fewer than a hundred and twenty tales, the composition of which, allowing a month for each, would have occupied the poet ten years. In fact, he would appear to have taken nearly five years to have produced the twenty-four which we possess, four of which are unfinished or interrupted. Even from these, three or four should be deducted as probably re-handlings of earlier compositions. These stories, moreover, seem to occupy the entire journey to Canterbury, extending, according to the most probable arrangement, to four days. As the Host, calling on the narrator of the last tale to contribute his quota, says:—

Lordynges everychoon,  
Now lakketh us no talès more than oon :



¶ Prima. pars. ¶

Here begynneth the Segge of Thebes ful  
laucenably tolde by Iohn Lidgate yonke of  
Bury anneynge it to pe talle of Cautiony

**I**s quod I. neth of youre Emtesye  
I euerde am in to youre Compaigne  
And admyced a tale for to cele  
By hyu that hath power to compele  
I mene oure hofte gouernere and hyde

**O**f yone erkeone. rydeuge here bysde  
Thogh my wit. bareyne be and dulle  
I wolle reherce a foery wonderfulle  
Touchege the segge. and destracyon  
Of worthy Thebes. the myghty royale Tog  
Wilt and bygonne of olde Aquaine  
Upon the tyme of worthy Josue  
By diligence of hyge Anuphion  
Cheest cause first of this foundacyon



Fulfilled is my sentence and my decree.  
I trow that we hav herd of ech degree.  
Almost fulfild is al my ordinaunce :—

it may be assumed that the demand for two tales apiece had been dropped by the way, and that Chaucer intended to have written and inserted the remainder necessary to make up the thirty. Whether he adhered to his intention of writing thirty more for the return journey may be doubted, for the last tale told, the Parson's, is not a tale at all, but a prose sermon. If dramatic propriety was to continue to be observed, some of the remaining stories must have been of the class "that sownen into synne," for which Chaucer professes



The "Tabard" Inn, Southwark

From "*The Gentleman's Magazine*," 1812

his repentance in the epilogue ; if indeed this appendage be genuine, which is gravely to be doubted. It is most difficult to believe that he would have renounced and condemned the great bulk of his poetry. A still stronger argument is that among the tales meriting disapprobation on the grounds alleged would be *The Wife of Bath's*, which nevertheless we find Chaucer recommending to a friend in a poem known to have been written in 1396, or five years after the probable cessation of the Tales :—

The Wyf of Bathe I pray you that ye rede.

*L'Envoy de Chaucer a Bukton.*

In fact, notwithstanding the contrary opinion of so excellent a critic as Mr. Pollard, we cannot help suspecting that *The Parson's Tale* itself is largely interpolated. To say nothing of its inconsistency with Chaucer's reputed inclination towards the opinions of Wycliffe, it is unlikely that so artistic a

writer would have allowed the priest to pronounce so prolix a discourse after the Host's distinct warning that the set of sun would speedily cut him short, even though it seems just possible that the feat might have been accomplished without the Parson proving himself a second Joshua! It is even more

### ¶ The tale of the canons pema



### ¶ And begyneth the tale

**W**ith this canon I dwelld by yij year  
 And of his sciens am I neuer the neer  
 He that I had I haue lost ther by  
 And godd knowe so haue mo than I  
 Ther as I was wont to be right faste & gay  
 Of charyge and of otheer lordz amys  
 Now may I beere an hols by on myn bed  
 And ther my colour was both faste & red  
 Now it is wan and of a ledyn hede  
 Who so it shal seee shal be wite  
 And of myn swynk y shent is myn eye  
 So such an awauntege it is to multyple  
 That slepyng sciens hath made me so lare  
 That I haue no goode word that ever I saie  
 And yet I am entred so for ther by  
 Of gold that I sholded tell by

From the second edition of Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales" printed by Caxton

improbable that Chaucer would have inveighed so vehemently against the fashionable apparel of the classes with which he himself mainly consorted, and upon whose good opinion he was so largely dependent. However this may be, there seems ground for the supposition that he desisted from his work under the influence of depressed spirits, whether caused by intellectual strain or by his deprivation of office. The loss is great indeed, and the more so as his plan might well have included a parenthetical description of the pilgrims' spiritual and secular doings at Canterbury, invaluable as a picture of the manners of the age.

It is indeed as a painter of manners, and still more as the source from which portraiture of manners in English literature mainly derives, that Chaucer takes

rank among the chiefest figures in this literature. As a poet he is indeed great, but when we compare that portion of his work which reveals him merely as the poet with *The Canterbury Tales*, which have in addition so many of the excellences of prose, we perceive that he would not be so great a poet if he were not a poet and something more. His two special claims to renown are to have given such a panorama of English society as, had the undeveloped condition of the language allowed, might equally well have been presented in prose, and to have in so doing marked an epoch. Comparing *The Canterbury Tales* with the rest of his work, we must recognise its infinitely greater

significance. *Troilus and Cryseide* is indeed epoch-making in a sense, but in a purely literary sense. With it the Italian element enters English poetry, to its signal improvement and refinement. But with *The Canterbury Tales* the English people enter, and poetry becomes truly national. No one but Chaucer had yet appeared capable of embodying the national sentiment in true poetry. Langland, indeed, may have had the capacity, but his genius had not been vivified by French and Italian sunshine, and his adherence to the uncouth metrical forms of the past disabled him from expressing the spirit of the new age. Many of the writers of the metrical romances were excellent poets, with a good perception of melody, and would easily have adapted themselves to improvements in metre. But they had no popular sympathies, their condescension would hardly have extended so far as Chaucer's Franklin even,



Pilgrims setting out from the "Tabard"

From Urry's "Chaucer"

knight of the shire though he was. Chaucer fully realises his superiority to both these schools, and makes no secret of it. He ridicules the alliterative versification when he makes his Parson say :—

I cannot geeste *rum, ram, ruf* by letter :—

that is, "I cannot write *gestes* in alliterative metre." It is true that he adds

Ne God wootte, rym holde I but litel better ;

but this is one of the hits in which Chaucer indulges at the expense of his characters, as when he drily remarks that the amphibious shipman "rode as he *coulthe*," or that the really busy lawyer seemed busier than he was. The Parson, a Monsieur Jourdain reversed, is talking rhyme without knowing it. On the other hand, the faults of the metrical romance, especially its affectation and its intolerable word-spinning, are amusingly parodied in the *Rime of Sir Thopas*, and the unkindest cut of all is the abrupt interruption of the Host, warning the minstrel that his style is now superannuated.

*Chaucer as a  
painter of  
social types*

Chaucer was indeed writing in the dawning of a new age, a crepuscular period which may perhaps be not inaccurately synchronised with the period of the Great Schism from 1378 to 1417, when the ideas of the Renaissance came fairly above the horizon. Though not precisely a humanist, Chaucer had done much to prepare the way for humanism, but he is not so much the apostle of any ideal tendency as the faithful delineator of the actual world. Collecting representatives of all classes of society, he shows us what the people in whose



From the fourteenth-century Ellesmere MS.

persons the transition from the mediæval to the modern was effected actually were. The highest and the lowest classes are exempt from his observation, neither barons nor beggars could well associate with their fellow-men on a pilgrimage to Canterbury: but he includes all he can, from the Knight to the Cook. In the Knight, one of Chaucer's most beautiful portraits, we see the military character at its best, chivalry purged from all alloy of the foppish and fantastic by a long course of actual warfare, represented with admirable tact as not performed against Christian nations, but against the enemies of the faith in all lands. The

probability of the picture is enhanced if we remember that in 1390, about two years after the composition of Chaucer's Prologue, the son of his patron, John o' Gaunt, the future Henry IV., departed on a crusade to "Pruce," and might almost say

In Lettowe had he reysed<sup>1</sup> and in Ruce.

*Some of  
Chaucer's  
characters*

The good Knight, the first literary representative of one of the most persistent of English types, worthily incarnated in our own time in Colonel Newcome, is finely contrasted with the type of the burghess impersonated in the Host, the leader and controller of the party. Although all treat the Knight with the utmost respect, the years which have mellowed his character have impaired his vigour, and his dignity would evidently suffer if he were brought into close contact with some of the rougher characters among the party. The Host, jolly and free of tongue, but endowed with a mother-wit that supplies the place of breeding, and sufficiently diplomatic to suit his talk to his company, fills the post of factotum to admiration.

<sup>1</sup> Travelled.



A seemly man oure Hooste was with-alle  
 For to have ben a marchal in an halle,  
 A large man he was, with eyen stepe,<sup>1</sup>  
 A fairer burgeys is ther noon in Chepe ;  
 Boold of his speche, and wys and well-y-taught,  
 And of manhod hym lakkede right naught.  
 Eek therto he was right a merie man,  
 And after soper pleyen he bigan,  
 And spak of myrthe amonges othere thynges,  
 Whan that we hadde maad our rekenynges.

Even the Host could not give a free rein to joviality until he had got his money.

The social gap between the Knight and the Host is bridged by the Franklin, a man of worship without any of the nobler qualities of the Knight, and several degrees lower in standing ; yet, like the Host, one to keep the wheels of social life turning, whilst the Knight is mainly a looker on :—

Withoute baké mete was never his hous,  
 Of fische and flesshe and that so plenteous  
 It snewed in his hous of mete and drynke.  
 Of alle deyntees that men koude thynte.  
 After the sondry sesons of the yeer,  
 So changed he his mete and his soper.

Yet this devotee of good living, "Epicurus owene sone," so far deviates from the precepts of his master as to be forward in charging himself with public duties :—

At sessions ther was he lord and sire ;  
 Ful ofté tyme he was knyght of the shire,  
 A sherrive had he bene, and a countour ;  
 Was no wher such a worthy vavasour.<sup>2</sup>

A highly interesting passage, showing how the traditions of English public life in the counties remain unbroken to this day. It is observable that the Franklin rides next to the Sergeant-at-Law, probably as one of the great unpaid in quest of legal guidance.

As the Franklin is a foil to the Knight, so is the Miller a foil to the Host. The Host can adapt himself to circumstances. He can hold his own with any one in rough language, but when he has to ask the Prioress for a tale

He sayde  
 As curteisly as it had been a mayde.

But the Miller is a piece of low nature at first hand, a rude block without a single polished corner. Chaucer's description of him is one of the most graphic of his pictures :—

The Miller was a stout carle for the nones,  
 Ful byg he was of braun and eke of bones ;  
 That proved wel, for o'er al ther he cam,  
 At wrastlyng he would have away the ram.

<sup>1</sup> Bright.

<sup>2</sup> Landholder.

He was short-sholdered, broode, a thikke knarre,  
 There nas no dore that he nold heve of barre,  
 Or breke it at a rennyng with his heed.  
 His berd as any sowe or foxe was reed.  
 And therto brood, as thugh it were a spade,  
 Upon the cope<sup>1</sup> right of his nose he hade  
 A werte, and theren stood a tofte of herys,  
 Reed as the bristles of a sowys erys,  
 His nosé-thirlés<sup>2</sup> blaké were and wyde ;  
 A swerd and bokeler bare he by his syde ;  
 His mouthe as wide was as a grete forneys,  
 He was a janglere and a goliardeys,<sup>3</sup>  
 And that was most of sinne and harlotries.  
 Well koud he stelen corn and tollen thries,  
 And yet he had a thombe of gold, pardee.  
 A whit cote and a blew hood weréd he.  
 A bagge pipe wel koud he blowe and sowne,  
 And therewithal he broghte us out of townce.

This sturdy churl relates a tale entirely in keeping with his own character for coarseness and humour, for dramatic propriety must be considered above all things. The apology which Chaucer deems it necessary to prefix is important, showing that among "gentil wights" there were even at that period bounds to our ancestors' toleration in these matters. Is he not a reporter? Would it be allowable to

Falsen som of my mateere ?  
 And therfore, who-so list it nat i-here,  
 Turne o'er the leef and chose another tale ;  
 For he shal find enowe, both grete and smale,  
 Of storial thing that toucheth gentillesse,  
 And eke moralite, and hoolnesse.  
 Blameth nat me if that ye chese amys,  
 The Millere is a cherl, ye knowe wel this.

*Chaucer's  
 humour and  
 morality*

Most humorous is the ingenuity with which Chaucer thus shifts the blame of encouraging the Miller's ribaldry from himself to his readers, and had any one excepted that the remedy he deems so simple was impracticable to the Miller's hearers, he would probably have laid the blame upon the Host. What the more decorous members of his reading public may have thought we do not know, but assuredly in later ages neither lord nor lady has wished the Miller's tale and similar compositions away. Their value augments by efflux of time, for they become more and more precious as authentic testimonies to manners receding into obscurity. But they are not the staple of the collection. *The Canterbury Tales* may be compared to a mingled gallery of Italian and Dutch pictures. The latter are entrusted to the pilgrims of the lower class, such as the Miller, the Reeve, the Friar, the Summoner; the others to the folk of condition, such as the Knight, the Squire, the Franklin, the Man of Law, the Physician, the Clerk of Oxford; while the Merchant, the Shipman, the Wife of Bath and the Nun's Priest may be regarded as intermediate. There is one

<sup>1</sup> Top.

<sup>2</sup> Nostrils

<sup>3</sup> Ribald.





apparent exception in the worthless Pardoner, who tells one of the most moral, striking and tragical tales in the collection. But this is purely in the way of business, and when he has finished narrating and moralising, Chaucer makes him turn himself inside out with a neatness which affords one of the best specimens of his comic manner :—

But, sirs, a word forgat I in my tale ;  
 I have relikes and pardons in my male<sup>1</sup>  
 As faire as any man in Engeland,  
 Which were me yeven by the popes hand  
 If any of you wole of devocioun  
 Offren, and han myn absolutioun,  
 Com forth anon, and kneleth here adown,  
 And mekely receyveth my pardoun ;  
 Or elles taken pardon as ye wende,  
 Al newe and fresh at every milès ende—  
 So that ye offren alwey newe and newe  
 Nobles or pens, whiche that be goode and trewe.  
 It is an honour to everech that is heer  
 That ye mowe have a suffisant Pardoneer  
 Tassoillé you in contree as ye ryde  
 For aventúres whiche that may betyde,  
 Paraventure ther may fallen one or two  
 Down of his hors and breke his nekke atwo ;  
 Looke which a seuretee is it to you alle,  
 That I am in your felawship y-falle,  
 That may assoile you, both more and lasse  
 Whann that the soul shal fro the body passe.  
 I rede that our Host here shal bigynne,  
 For he is most enveloped in sinne.

Specimens of Chaucer's more elevated mood will be more conveniently selected from his other works, which might otherwise fail to receive due notice. *The Knight's Tale* (Palamon and Arcite) is, however, the highest flight he ever took, and *The Squire's Tale* (Cambuscan), *The Man of Lawe's Tale* (Custaunce), and *The Clerk of Oxenford's Tale* (Griselda), are greatly superior to any romantic fiction that England had seen before him. Some inferior stories may be old work employed to eke out deficient material. If the two compositions in prose, *Melibeus* (a translation from Albertano of Brescia) and *The Parson's Tale*, were introduced for this reason, Chaucer's need of "copy" must have been very sore. There can be no doubt that he intended them to form a part of the collection, though the uncertainty as to the exact order of the tales, which continues after Bradshaw's best efforts, seems to prove that this collection was not published by himself. The various sources of the Tales are fully investigated in Professor Skeat's edition of Chaucer's works.

The frankness and good fellowship with which all the pilgrims meet at the Tabard, and, save for some wrangles, mostly growing out of hereditary trade grudges, maintain throughout their journey, convey a pleasing idea of the

*Inferences  
 respecting the  
 state of con-  
 temporary  
 society*

<sup>1</sup> Wallet.

prevalent simplicity of manners and kindly feeling between classes. At the same time it is clear that, from no fault of their own, the classes are drifting more widely apart, and that increasing wealth and culture, all tending one way, must eventually provoke a scission. Even now, each, as a rule, rides and talks with the man nearest him in social standing. One feature is surprising—the general air of comfort and content. King Edward's conquests have been entirely lost, but nobody thinks of them. Only six or seven years



From the fourteenth-century *Elle-mere MS.*

before the country had been agitated by a tumultuous revolt against excessive taxation, accompanied by a fiery outburst of socialistic doctrines, which had been quenched in blood after costing the lives of many nobles. The only vestige of this is a ludicrous comparison in the tale of Chanticleer between the noise of Straw's rabble rout and that of the farm people pursuing the fox :—

Certes he, Jakké Straw and his meynee,  
Ne made never shoutés half so shrille  
When that they wolden any Flemynge kille.

Are we to suppose that Chaucer, a courtly poet, deliberately excluded the suffering of the villeins from his consideration? The Reeve (steward) is plainly taxed with wronging his

master, but nothing is said of his oppressing the poor. One kind of oppression, indeed, is powerfully satirised, but one which affected all classes except the very highest—that wrought by the rapacity of ecclesiastical officers. This clearly was an insufferable grievance, and, taken in connection with Chaucer's onslaught on the knavery of mendicant friars and pardoners, and the idleness and luxury of monks, suggests the inquiry whether Chaucer had any sympathy with the Wycliffe movement then surging around him, or any prevision of its consequences. Probably his position towards Wycliffe was nearly that of Erasmus towards Luther. He seems to convey some hint of sympathy when the Parson, reproving the Host for profanity, is called a Lollard for his pains, as in the eighteenth century he would have been called a Methodist. Ecclesiastical extortions, however, though exciting Chaucer's ire, do not occupy much of his attention, any more than foreign wars, those against the infidel excepted, or the contentions of nobles and parliaments at home. It would be difficult to make out from *The Canterbury Tales* under what form of government Englishmen were then living. The general view which they give of English family life at the time is not unfavourable, if we bear in mind how large a share of the satirist's stock-in-trade has

always been contributed by the real or imaginary imperfections of the female sex. The standard of education appears higher than might have been expected, even the talk of the unlettered implies a considerable amount of general information, and the Scriptures are freely quoted in the vernacular. Agencies were clearly at work which in some measure anticipated the office of the printing-press : even the preachings of itinerating cheats like the Friar and the Pardoner must have helped to preserve the common man's mind from utter stagnation. Among these agencies must be enumerated travel, which seems



The Reeve

MS. Gg. 4. 27, University Library, Cambridge

to have been more frequent and more extensive than could have been expected. We are prepared to hear of the Knight having fought the unbeliever wherever he could find him, and of the Shipman knowing every haven “from Gootland to Finistere” : but it is surprising to learn that the Wife of Bath has been three times at Jerusalem, to say nothing of Rome, Bologna, Compostella, and Cologne.

Among Chaucer's other works the one with the first claim upon our attention is the *Troilus and Criseide*, for this, too, in a manner may be termed epoch-making. It is the first example in our language of heroic narrative, as distinguished from the lyrical narrative of the metrical romances. It affords the first instance of a well-ordered plot, distinguishable from a mere series of

*“Troilus &  
Criseide”*

adventures. It is the first poem that is psychologically interesting, exhibiting the development of character under the stress of circumstance. Historically it marks the introduction into English poetry of that Italian influence by which it was to be so greatly transformed and enriched. Chaucer's obligations to Italy are indeed extensive: a third of his poem is a translation from the *Filostrato* of Boccaccio. Yet he amply vindicates his originality by his enrichment of his original, and in particular he has anticipated the genius of Italian poetry itself by his creation of Pandarus. Pandarus is precisely the



The Cook of London

MS. Gg. 4. 27, University Library, Cambridge

semi-serious, semi-comic character in which Italian poetry delights, and in which at a later date Italian poets excelled, but here Chaucer owes little to Boccaccio. Pandarus, the lovers' disinterested friend, who accepts an equivocal part out of sheer compassion and amiability, and by no means the "broker-lackey" of *Troilus and Cressida*, is an invention of Chaucer's own. He has further greatly improved upon his original by the elevation which he has given to the character of Troilus, and exhibits great skill in depicting the various stages of Cressida's yielding, first to Troilus and afterwards to Diomedes. He evidently does not wish his heroine to forfeit our sympathies, nor does she. In the first part of her history she would command modern sympathies



as fully as Juliet, could any such valid plea as the hereditary enmity of Montague and Capulet be adduced, but the chivalric code of morals made this unnecessary for Chaucer's contemporaries. In the later passages of her career, while forfeiting respect, she obtains compassion, and might have had something more if Chaucer had taken more pains with the character of the triumphant Diomedes. Perhaps he feared to steal away his reader's, like Cressida's, heart from Troilus, a most fascinating hero. Nevertheless, as in *The Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer is here essentially the comic poet. He avoids the deeper



The Pardoner

MS. Gg. 4 27, University Library, Cambridge

he situation, regrets the inevitably tragic ending of his tale, and trusts to indemnify himself by writing something more cheerful :—

Go, litel book ! Go, litel myn tragedie !  
Then God thy maker yit, or that he dye,  
So send might to make in som comedie !

He might have thought himself indemnified by his creation of Pandarus, the good-natured sceptical man-of-the-world, who feels himself in his experience so superior to the callow lovers, but who also seems to himself wiser than he really is. The scene where, approaching Cressida on his mission, he finds her reading the romance of Thebes, with apologies for not being occupied with the lives of the Saints, is, in M. Jusserand's words, "a true comedy scene, the

dialogue so rapid and sharp that one might think this part written for a play.' Chaucer would have been a great dramatist if he had lived in the time of Shakespeare. His poem is well characterised by Mr. Rossetti as at once "the very topmost blossom and crown of the chivalric passion and gallantry, and the exquisite firstfruits of that humorous study of character in which our national writers have so specially excelled."

*Troilus and Cryseide* is not a poem from which quotation is easy. It has few "purple patches." The poet rarely sinks below himself, but neither does



The Wife of Bath

MS. Gg. 4. 27, University Library, Cambridge

he ascend very much beyond the general level of easy adequacy to his theme. This very adequacy renders his most characteristic passages, as they ought to be, discursive, and ill adapted for quotation. The following is a good example of his power in the expression of deep feeling. Troilus is lamenting the departure of Cressida to the Greek camp :—

Who seeth you now, my righté lodé sterre  
 Who sit right now or stant in your preséncé  
 Who can comfórtén now your hertés werre  
 Now I am gon, whom yeve ye audience?  
 Who speketh for me right now in mye abséncé

Allas, no wight : and that is al my care ;  
For wel I wot, as yvele as I ye fare.

How sholde I thus ten dayés ful endure,  
Whan I the firsté might have al this tene ?  
How shal she don ek, sorwful créature ?  
For tendrenesse how shal she ek sustene  
Swich wo for me ? O pitous, pale and greene  
Shal ben your freshe, womanliché face  
For longing, or ye torne into this place.



The Monk

*MS. Gg. 4. 27, University Library, Cambridge*

And whan he fel in any slomberinges,  
Anon biginne he sholde for to grone,  
And dremen of the dredfullesté thinges  
That mighte ben ; as, mete <sup>1</sup> he were allone  
In place horriblé making ay his mone,  
Or meten that he was amongés alle  
His enemies and in hir hondés falle.

And therwithal his body sholdé sterte,  
And with the stert al sodeinly awake,  
And swich a tremour fele aboute his herte,  
That of the fere his body sholdé quake ;  
And therwithal he sholde a noisé make,  
And seme as though he sholde fallé depe  
From height on-lofte, and then he wolde wepe

<sup>1</sup> Inagine.

And rewen on himself so pitously,  
 That wonder was to here his fantasye  
 Another time he sholdé mightily  
 Comforte himself, and seyn it was folýe  
 So causeless swich drede for to drye ;<sup>1</sup>  
 And aft begin his aspré<sup>2</sup> peynés newe,  
 That every man might on his sorwes rewe.

It will be immediately apparent how much under Chaucer English literature has gained in sustained facility of expression, sweetness of versification, and the



The Manciple

*MS. Gg. 4. 27, University Library, Cambridge*

command of appropriate language. Some of these lines seem a prefiguration of Spenser.

Before Chaucer had quite reached the end of his poem it occurred to him that his delineation of female inconstancy might offend the ladies :—

Beseching every lady bright of hewe,  
 And every gentil woman, what she be,  
 That, al be that Criseyde was untrewē,  
 That for that gilt ye be not wroth with me.

<sup>1</sup> Endure.

<sup>2</sup> Sharp.

Ye may her gilt in other bokés see.  
And gladlier I wol writé, yif you leste  
Penelopée's trouthe and good Alceste.

He partially realised this aspiration in *The Legend of Good Women*, memorable, unless *The Knight's Tale* had preceded it, as the first written in heroic metre. The Prologue, one of his best compositions, and extant in two different versions, is a further deprecation of the offence given by the unfavourable

"*Legend of Good Women*"



Envy (on his wolf gnawing a bone)

Charity (with her winged and flaming heart)

"Parson's Tale"

MS. Gg. 4 27, University Library, Cambridge

view taken of feminine constancy in *Troilus and Cryseide* and his translation of the *Roman de la Rose*. The poet feigns that, desirous of seeing the daisy's first opening to the star of day, he passes the night in a garden to be on the spot. While sleeping there he has a vision of angry Love :—

Whan I was leyde, and hadde myn eyen hea  
I fel on slepe, in-with an hour or two.  
Me metté<sup>1</sup> how I lay in the medowe tho,

<sup>1</sup> Dreamed

To seen this flour that I love so and drede ;<sup>1</sup>  
 And from afer come walking in the mede  
 The god of Love, and in his hand a quene,  
 And she was clad in real<sup>2</sup> habite grene ;  
 A fret of golde she hadde next her heer,  
 And upon that a white crowne she beer,  
 With flourouns smalé, and I shal nat lye,  
 For al the worlde right as a daysye  
 Y-corouned is with white leves lyte,  
 So were the flourouns of her coroun white ;  
 For of a perlé, fine, oriental,  
 Hire whité coronne was y-maked al,  
 For which the white coroune above the grene  
 Made her like a daysie for to sene,  
 Considered eke her fret of gold above.  
 Y-clothéd was this mighty god of Love  
 In silke enbrouded, ful of grene greves,<sup>3</sup>  
 In-with a fret of redé rosé leves,  
 The freshest syn the worlde was first bygonne,  
 His gilté here was corouned with a sonne,  
 In stede of golde, for hevynesse and wyghte ;  
 Therwith me thoght his facé shon so brighte  
 That wel unnethés<sup>4</sup> myght I him beholde,  
 And in his hande me thoght I saw him holde  
 Two firy dartés, as the gledes<sup>5</sup> rede,  
 And angelyke his winges I saw sprede.  
 And, al be that men seyn blinde is he,  
 Algate me thoghte that he mighte se ;  
 For sternély on me he gan by holde,  
 So that his looking doth my herte colde.

Love rates the poet, and accuses him of

Letting folke from here devocioun  
 To servé me, and holdest it folye  
 To servé Love. Thou maist it nat denye,  
 For in pleyne text, withouten need of glose,  
 Thou hast translate the Romaunce of the Rose,  
 That is an heresye ayeins my lawe,  
 And makest wisé folke from me withdrawe ;  
 And of Cresyde thou hast seyde as thee lyste,  
 That maketh men to wommen lasse<sup>6</sup> tryste.<sup>7</sup>

The beautiful lady intercedes, and he is let off on condition of performing a penance, thus described :—

Thou shalt while that thou livest yere by yere  
 The mosté partyé of thy tyme spende  
 In makyng of a glorious legende  
 Of goodé wymmen, maydenés and wyves,  
 That weren true in lovyng al hire lyves ;

<sup>1</sup> L'esca fu 'l seme chi egli sparge e miete,  
 Dolce et acerbo, chi i' pavento e bramo.

*Petrarch, Sonnet cxix.*

<sup>2</sup> Royal.

<sup>3</sup> Boughs.

<sup>4</sup> Hardly.

<sup>5</sup> Live coals.

<sup>6</sup> Less.

<sup>7</sup> Trust.

Hilom þe was ðeðelinge in þre corne  
 and he æfen amon of his deap  
 þæt he boldly ðeðe cyrcion  
 in þre stunge of forniacione  
 of whiche anþr æt of banding  
 of diffamacion & a bolding

Off charcherues / of testamentes,  
 Off contentes / of law / off sacramentes,  
 Off vsury / of Simony also  
 Bot certes / hys hounes / wde he grete sty / woo  
 Ther sholden singe is / per / wber hente  
 And smale tapers / weren sold by / schente  
 In any pson wolde / vpon hem plem /  
 Ther myght / a stert / him no peccynale / peyne  
 For smale tapers / & ety / smale / offynge  
 He maade / pe peple / sprylysh / to singe  
 For æ / pe bishop / c. / wylth / hem / wy / bish / hode  
 Ther / weryn / pe / clurke / . / Decanes / bolke  
 And / pan / hadde / he / poss / . / por / ho / his / iurisdictione  
 Wother / to / done / on / he / m / ex / ce / pt / ione  
 He / had / a / sounoure / i / redy / to / his / hand  
 A / s / phere / bofe / was / none / in / yngelande  
 For / So / to / tel / he / had / his / especiale  
 That / wylth / him / w / here / he / myght / abaule  
 He / coupe / spere / of / hys / hounes / one / or / tuo  
 So / to / techen / him / to / foure / & / tiben / ty / mo  
 For / pou / he / pis / sounoure / woode / wber / agan / bare  
 So / to / tel / his / hard / trop / . / . / Wil / nou / y / spary  
 For / the / bus / oute / off / her / ex / ce / pt / ione  
 Ther / hang / off / vs / no / iurisdictione  
 ne / neuer / sholde / corne / of / al / her / l / ucy  
 Peter / so / bus / pe / wy / n / men / off / pe / sty / ces  
 As / pis / Con / m / d / p / put / houte / of / al / our / a / u / y





And tell of falsé men that hem bytraien,  
That al here lyf ne don nat but asayen  
How many women they may doon a shame,  
For in youre worlde that now is holde a game.  
And thogh thee like nat a lovere bee,  
Speke wel of love ; this penance yive I thee.

Chaucer accordingly proceeds to indite the history of Cleopatra, and follows it up with those of Thisbe, Dido, Medea, Lucretia, Ariadne, Philomena, Phyllis, and Hypermnestra. But here he stopped, leaving the ten more he had planned unattempted, even though the last of them, Alcestis, was to have idealised Queen Anne herself. He should have begun with it, for as



Gluttony



Abstinence

"Parson's Tale"

*MS. Gg. 4. 27, University Library, Cambridge*

Mr. Pollard remarks, it was scarcely possible that he should not tire of monotonous panegyric. The subject, moreover, if, as affirmed by Lydgate, Queen Anne herself suggested it to him, was not of his own devising, and it is but seldom that a poet can entertain a suggestion from the outside with the cordiality which Milton manifested towards Ellwood's. The tales, nevertheless, contain many admirable passages. As might be expected, the first of the series, Cleopatra, Thisbe, Dido, are the best.

The following passage from Cleopatra is highly spirited, though Chaucer's Cleopatra is not the Cleopatra of Shakespeare or of history :—

She made hir subtil workmen make a shryne  
Of al the rubees and the stonés fyne  
In al Egypté that she koude espye ;  
And putte ful the shryne of spicerye,

And let the corps embawme, and forth she fette  
 This dedè corps, and in the shryne it shette  
 And next the shryne a pitte than doth she grave,  
 And alle the serpentes that she myght have  
 She put hem in that grave, and thus she seyde :—  
 “ Now, love, to whom my sorweful herte obeyde  
 So ferforthely that fro that blissful houre  
 That I you swor to ben al frely youre,  
 I menc you, Antonius, my Knight,  
 That never waking in the day or nyght  
 Ye nere out of myn herte’s remembraunce,  
 For wele or woo, for carole or for daunce ;  
 And in myself this covenant made I tho,  
 That ryght swych as ye felter wele or wo,  
 As ferforth as it in my powere lay,  
 Unréprováble unto my wyfnood ay,  
 The samé wolde I felen, life or deethe ;  
 And thilke covenaut, while me lasteth breethe,  
 I wol fulfille ; and that shal wel be seene,  
 Was never unto hir love a trewer quene  
 And wyth that worde, naked, with ful good herte,  
 Among the serpents in the pit she sterte ;  
 And ther she chees to have her burynge.  
 Anon the neddres<sup>1</sup> gon her for to styngre,  
 And she her deeth receveth with good cheere,  
 For love of Antony that was so deere.

The first English artist in the heroic couplet was assuredly not the worst.

“*The House  
 of Fame*”

The most celebrated of Chaucer’s remaining poems is *The House of Fame*, an allegory founded on Ovid’s famous description in the *Metamorphoses*. It suffers from Chaucer’s habitual deficiency in constructive skill, except when following a model, and is far from rivalling either this or Pope’s subsequent adaptation, *The Temple of Fame*, in strictly poetical merit, but this was hardly Chaucer’s aim. He designs to amuse, and while the early part is somewhat tedious, the painting of Fame’s hall is bright and lively ; and there is much humour in her treatment of her votaries, to whom, according to their deserts, she assigns the golden trumpet, the black trumpet, or no trumpet at all. As already remarked, it was probably begun not long after the poet’s return from his mission to Genoa and Florence, laid aside, and taken up again about 1383, but was never completed, though probably little remained to be added. The scheme of the poem betrays an intimate acquaintance with Dante, but it has nothing of the mediæval spirit.

“*The Parla-  
 ment of  
 Fowls.*”

The date of *The Parliament of Fowls* is fixed at 1382 by the subject, the poem being an allegory on the marriage of Richard II. to Anne of Bohemia. The eagle which the eagle princess favours is Richard, while the two terrels which woo her unsuccessfully are the two princes of lower degree to whom she had been previously contracted. The allegory is spirited and graceful, but the most poetical parts of the piece are the induction, borrowed from the *Somnium Scipionis*, and the description of the garden where the fowls meet on

<sup>1</sup> Adders.

Valentine's Day to choose their mates. The invention here frequently brings to mind a celebrated work later by a century, Francesco Colonna's *Polifilo*.

Some poems inferior in merit and importance to the above are still of considerable interest for special reasons. *The Book of the Duchess* is Chaucer's earliest work that has come down to us; it records his attachment to the House of Lancaster, and is remarkable for a bright picture of bonny English *Minor works.*



Richard II.

*From the gilt effigy in Westminster Abbey*



Anne of Bohemia

*From the gilt effigy in Westminster Abbey*

girlhood. *The Complaint of Mars* is an interesting example of the treatment of contemporary circumstances under a veil of allegory, as we have already seen "shadowing forth" the institution of the Order of the Garter in *The Green Knight*. *The Complaint unto Pity* is eloquent and of moment if it really expresses Chaucer's personal feelings. *Anelyda and Arcite* seems to indicate that Chaucer did at one time propose to tell the story of *Palamon and Arcite* in another metre than the heroic, though it remains uncertain whether the intention was completely carried out. Chaucer's strictly lyrical poems are not numerous. Though a master of tuneful versification, he seems to have

rarely felt the lyrical impulse; he can prolong the flow of music indefinitely, but has no snatches of melody. It does indeed appear that he wrote many *balades*, *virelays*, and the like, which have not come down to us, but these pieces would in general be anything rather than spontaneous gushes of song. The good fortune of Professor Skeat has recently retrieved one, which may follow as an example. The music of the writer's verse and his mastery of his complicated form are admirable, but when we find him comparing his immersion in love to the immersion of a pike in a sauce made of sopped bread and spices, we must suspect that "Rosemounde's" chains were but lightly worn by him :—

## BALADE TO ROSEMOUNDE.

Madame, ye ben of al beauté the shryne,  
 As fer as cercled is the mappé mounde,  
 For as the crystal glorious ye shyne  
 And lyké ruby ben your chekés rounde.  
 Ther with ye ben so mery and so jocounde  
 That a revel whan that I see you daunce,  
 It is an oynément unto my wounde,  
 Though ye to me ne do no daliaunce.

Far though I wepe of teres full a tyne,  
 Yet may that wo myn herté nat confounde ,  
 Your seemly voys that ye so smal out-twine <sup>1</sup>  
 Maketh my thought in joye and blis habounde.  
 So curteisly I go, with lové bounde,  
 That to myself I say, in my penaunce,  
 Suffyseth me to love you, Rosemounde,  
 Though ye to me ne do no daliaunce.

Nas never pyke walwéd in galantyne  
 As I in love am walwed and y-wounde ;  
 For which ful ofté I myself dyyne  
 That I am trewe Tristram the secounde ;  
 My love may not be refreyd <sup>2</sup> nor afounde <sup>3</sup>;  
 I brenne ay in an amorous plesaunce.  
 Do what you lyst, I wyl your thral be founde,  
 Though ye to me ne do no daliaunce.

*Significance  
 and perennial  
 freshness of  
 Chaucer*

Chaucer's significance could not be appreciated by himself or his contemporaries. It might even then be seen how greatly he excelled all preceding poets in command of language and metre, in felicity of subject and treatment, in all things relating to the poetic art. But it is only on looking back from afar that it could be discerned how completely he personified the union of the Norman and the Saxon in the Englishman, or with what authority he ushered in the new period of our language. Nor could contemporaries have foretold that perennial freshness which is perhaps the most extraordinary of his attributes. While many other writers of great name and much nearer to our times

<sup>1</sup> Untwisting all the chains that tie  
 The hidden soul of harmony.

*L'Allegro.*

<sup>2</sup> Chilled.

<sup>3</sup> Founder.

have become more or less obscure and unsympathetic with the spirit of the age, Chaucer, with the disadvantages of partly obsolete diction and a state of society widely differing from our own, remains almost as fresh as when he wrote, and a permanent source of inspiration to his successors from Spenser and Dryden down to Keats and William Morris. This can only denote great simplicity of character, and a spontaneity of utterance remarkable in one so rarely visited by poetical inspiration in its purest form, the lyrical. The same freshness characterises the other most illustrious literary productions of the age, Froissart's *Chronicles*, Petrarch's *Canzoniere*, and the *Decameron* of



Lechery (with her goat and sparrow)

Chastity (trampling on the dragon of lust)

## "Parson's Tale"

MS. Gg. 4. 27, University Library, Cambridge

Boccaccio, and may be regarded as the accompaniment of the youth of an age of letters.

Several poems incorrectly attributed to Chaucer have found their way into the collected editions of his writings, where they ought always to remain as an appendix, although their spuriousness has been satisfactorily demonstrated by Bradshaw, Skeat and Ten Brink. The most important are *The Flower and the Leaf*, so widely known from the brilliant *rifacimento* of Dryden, *The Court of Love*, *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale*, and *Chaucer's Dream*. It is difficult to determine whether it be more mortifying to be compelled to deprive Chaucer of so beautiful a poem as *The Flower and the Leaf*, or more satisfactory to find that he had so excellent a disciple as the anonymous author at that very dul

*Supposititi  
poems*

period of English literature, the fifteenth century. That this is its date the diction leaves no doubt, and it was probably written late in the century, as the Order of the Garter is spoken of as an ancient institution. Its rules of rhyming, too, are not Chaucer's. It is nevertheless not unworthy of him, and in particular contains one stanza, which, while it continued to be attributed to him, was frequently quoted as an example of his merit as a landscape-painter, and which is, in fact, more strikingly true to nature than most pieces of description in his genuine writings :—

To a pleasaunt grove I gan to passe,  
Long or the brighte sonne up-risen was,  
In which were okes greate, streight as a line,  
Under the which the grasse, so fresh of hewe,  
Was newly sprong ; and an eight foot or nine  
Every tree well fro his fellow grew,  
With branches brode, laden with leves newe,  
That sprongen out ayen the sunne shene  
Some very red, and some a glad light grene.

There is more description than character in the poem, which may be defined as a vision with affinity to a Masque. The writing is throughout very beautiful ; and if inferior in splendour to Dryden's renowned imitation, it has more of the spirit of courtly chivalry. The versification is excellent. It professes to be the work of a lady, but probably merely for reasons of dramatic propriety. Professor Skeat's argument that the assumption of the female character by a man would have seemed ridiculous, if it has any weight at all, cannot apply to an anonymous poem.

It is rather surprising that *The Court of Love* should ever have been attributed to Chaucer. The poem is only found in one manuscript of the early period of the sixteenth century, and there is no reason why this may not be the date of composition.<sup>1</sup> It is an elegant poem, rehearsing a youth's pilgrimage to the Court of Love, and, although differing from Chaucer in diction and metrical rules, clearly the work of one who had read him to good purpose. *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale*, also a very pretty poem, has been ascertained by Professor Skeat to be the composition of a writer named Clanvowe, plausibly identified with Sir Thomas Clanvowe, who died in 1410. *Chaucer's Dream*, a long narrative poem, has considerable poetical merit, but, as Professor Skeat remarks, is more like the romance of *Sir Launfal* than anything of Chaucer's. It does not follow that by representing Chaucer as the subject of the vision, the writer meant to imply that he was the author of the poem.

*The Canterbury Tales* was one of the first English books to be printed, Caxton probably putting the first edition in hand as soon as he set up his press in England. The first complete edition of Chaucer's works was

<sup>1</sup> Although *The Court of Love* is certainly not Chaucer's, there is no force in Professor Lounsbury's argument against its authenticity that such names as "Philogenet" could not have been used by a Western writer until after the fall of Constantinople ; Boccaccio has "Filocopo" in the first half of the fourteenth century.

William Thynne's in 1532, but the first really critical edition of any portion was Tyrwhitt's edition of *The Canterbury Tales* in 1775-1778, a masterpiece of learning and acumen. In 1845 Sir Harris Nicolas placed the biography of Chaucer on an authentic basis. In 1866 Henry Bradshaw took up the study of Chaucer with a vigour and acuteness which, if he had not allowed his attention to be diverted to other subjects, would have left little to be performed by others, although the rhyme test, so invaluable in ascertaining the authenticity of the writings attributed to Chaucer, was independently applied by Bernard Ten Brink, whose labours upon Chaucer in all departments are most important. About the same time an immense impetus was given to Chaucerian study by Dr. Furnivall's foundation and energetic direction of the Chaucer Society, whose numerous publications prepared the way for the standard library edition of Professor Skeat, and the one-volume edition by Mr. A. W. Pollard and his coadjutors, the most convenient for general readers. The authenticity of Chaucer's doubtful poems is fully investigated from the philological and metrical points of view in Professor Skeat's *Chaucer Canon* (1900). Professor Lounsbury's three volumes of Chaucerian essays are invaluable aids to the study of almost all questions connected with his writings. For Chaucer's grammar and metre in general, see the treatise by Bernard Ten Brink, recently translated into English, and, for his pronunciation, the works on the subject by Alexander J. Ellis and R. F. Weymouth.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE SUCCESSORS OF CHAUCER—THE BEGINNINGS OF CULTIVATED PROSE

*Decline of  
English poetry  
after Chaucer*

CHAUCER'S position in our literary history is, in one respect, ambiguous ; he does and he does not make an era. No great author is more utterly dissimilar to his predecessors among his own countrymen. His position is perfectly unique in his absolute unindebtedness to any preceding English poet. All his innovations, in so far as they are not suggested by his own genius, are importations from foreign literatures. So far he is, indeed, an epoch-making poet. But, whereas the new era introduced by authors of his significance is in general signalled by crowds of imitators and disciples, silence, broken only by the feeble accents of Lydgate and Hoccleve, gathers around Chaucer. The antiquated styles of poetry which he has superseded die out. We hear little of *rom, ram, ruf* in the fifteenth century, and though chivalric fiction stood at the threshold of a marvellous development in prose, metrical romances of chivalry after the pattern which he parodied in *Sir Thopas* are few and far between. But the new forms of poetry seem as dead as the old, or are cultivated with dismaying inefficiency. One elegant poet, indeed, the anonymous author of *The Flower and the Leaf*, might have continued Chaucer's work on the fanciful and romantic side, and probably would have done so if he had been a professed man of letters. He most likely belonged to the patrician class and wrote merely for amusement. But even he makes no approach to the greater and more truly national qualities of Chaucer, his humour, his perception of character, and his skill in depicting the life around him. Reversing the Apostolic truism, it might almost seem that, having first of Englishmen brought these qualities into the world with him, he had also carried them out. Tennyson, who justly calls him "The morning star of song," admits that two centuries elapsed before his beams awoke the Memnon of English literature :

Dan Chaucer, our first warbler, whose sweet breath  
Preluded those melodious blasts that fill  
The spacious times of great Elizabeth  
With songs that echo still.

It is far from Richard II. to Elizabeth !

We shall have to examine into the causes which rendered the fifteenth



century so exceedingly barren a period in the literature, not merely of England but of Europe. For the present our attention must be given to the contemporaries and successors who actually formed a circle of which Chaucer might be termed the centre, but not a sphere of which he could be regarded as the nucleus.

The points of dissimilarity between Chaucer and his contemporaries are entirely to his advantage. Compared with the most distinguished rivals of his own day he may be chiefly characterised as more of a national poet.

Layamon had attempted to write what in his day really passed for the national epic of England, but the substance of his poem was borrowed from the French. The metrical romancists, often genuine poets, were almost invariably translators or adapters. Two considerable poets remain, the anonymous author of *Pearl* and *The Green Knight*, and the author of *Piers Plowman*. It is a remarkable instance of the illusive power of style that Langland should appear to us so much more ancient than Chaucer. They were in fact contemporaries. *Piers Plowman* dates in its first recension from 1362, and Chaucer's first poem must have been composed within the six or seven years following. They depict the society of the same period, and each portrait bears the impress of spirit and truth. Yet, whereas the general effect of historical perspective is to cause persons and things to appear in closer proximity than was really the case, Langland appears as though he preceded Chaucer by a century. The main reasons must be that his poetical form is obsolete, while Chaucer's is as fresh as ever; that its employment constrained him to a cramped and uncouth method of expression, which to us, though unjustly, seems affectation, while Chaucer's verse glides smoothly along; above all, perhaps, that by resorting to Italy, Chaucer had placed himself in connection with the great traditions of classical art, imperfectly as these were then known or understood. There is every reason to believe that Langland might have done as much if he had enjoyed Chaucer's advantages, and that the difference between the two poets is chiefly that between the town mouse and the country mouse—one a courtier at a brilliant court, enjoying the most refined society and the keenest intellectual stimulus his age could afford; the other, though he spent much of his life in London, a provincial, picking up his training as he could, and looking upon the life of courts and cities as an external though highly intelligent observer. It is to the immortal honour of Chaucer that he did not under these circumstances become the mere court poet, but retained that living interest in English life in all its phases which made him its incomparable delineator.

*Chaucer the  
poet of his  
nation*

The gap between the two poets is partly filled up by a third, who, like *John Gower* Chaucer, combined the scholar with the courtier. The time has been when the name of JOHN GOWER seemed hardly less conspicuous than Chaucer's own in the record of English literature.

The history of Gower is imperfectly known, but this probably arises from the uneventful character of his life. Like Chaucer, he was a scholar and a courtier, but not

a courtier to the same extent, although of better birth and connections. Notwithstanding Caxton's assertion that he was a Welshman (probably founded on some erroneous connection of his name with the peninsula of Gower in Pembrokeshire) and Leland's statement of his relationship to the Yorkshire family of Gower, the identity of armorial bearings leaves little doubt of his having belonged to the family of Sir Robert Gower, of Brabourne, Kent, who died about 1349 possessed of property in Kent and Suffolk, one of whose Suffolk manors was afterwards made over by his daughter and son-in-law to their kinsman, John Gower, whose arms are the same as the poet's and who was in all probability the same person. Gower undoubtedly had property both in Kent and



Miniature Portrait of Gower

*British Museum, Egerton MS. 1991*

Suffolk, but was almost certainly a native of the former county. The lateness of his appearance as a poet, and his apparent attachment to the City, suggest that he may have been a merchant and made a fortune in business before addicting himself to study. There is no ground for identifying him with an Essex incumbent of the name. He was, in fact, married, and not before but long after the time at which he could have taken holy orders. The marriage took place in 1397, when Gower was living, as he continued to do until his death, in the priory of St. Mary Overies, Southwark. Three years afterwards he speaks of himself as old and blind, and it seems a reasonable inference that both the marriage and the residence were connected with the state of his health. He died in 1408, bequeathing considerable property. From the mention of his old age in 1400, he may be supposed to have been born



Illuminator presenting MS. to Patron.

[*Harleian MS. 7026, British Museum.*]



about 1330. The few known incidents of his life are mostly literary, and will be best considered along with his writings.

Gower was the literary Cerberus of his day

Who could pronounce  
A leash of languages at once.

Not merely, like Milton and Landor, Gray and Swinburne, did he entertain himself with compositions in exotic tongues as a graceful relief to more serious labour, but he actually wrote three poems of ambitious proportions in Latin, French, and English, each entitling him to a considerable place in the history of the literature to which it belonged. Either the claim he made for himself was manifested, or his contemporaries' appreciation of his desert was recorded in the monument, still extant, erected to him in the nave of St. Mary Overies, the church connected with the priory where he had lived so long,

*Gower a poly-  
glot poet*



Effigy of John Gower in St. Saviour's Church, Southwark

now known as St. Saviour's, Southwark, and soon to be the Cathedral of the new diocese. Here the poet's effigy reclines, the head pillowed on three massy volumes, inscribed *Speculum Meditantis*, *Vox Clamantis*, and *Confessio Amantis*. Notwithstanding the Latin titles, the first work is in French and the last in English. This latter alone it is which entitles him to be regarded as an English poet, or with which, strictly speaking, we have any concern; while, at the same time, the others are too intimately associated with his history and character to be altogether passed over.

As Gower's French poem, the *Speculum Meditantis*, is named first among his writings, and the other poems, whose date is approximately known, appear sufficient in themselves to have given employment for his latter years, this is reasonably supposed to have been the first in order of time of the three works on which he rested his reputation. The inference is supported by the existence of fifty French *balades* by him, which seem to present internal evidence of being the work of a comparatively young man, indicating that he composed in French before cultivating English or Latin poetry. In a poetical point of view they are the best of his productions, distinguished by much feeling and grace. They are accompanied by a long French poem on

*The "Speculum Meditantis"*

the duties of the married state, of no great merit. The *Speculum Meditantis* was until recently supposed to be lost, but in 1895 was happily identified by Gower's latest and principal editor, Mr. Macaulay, with a French poem in the library of the University of Cambridge, the *Mirour de l'Omme*. The history of the discovery is curious. Mr. Macaulay, in conversation with Dr. F. Jenkinson, the University librarian, expressed his belief that if Gower's lost poem were ever retrieved, the French title would prove to be a translation of *Speculum Hominis*, not *Speculum Meditantis*; and Dr. Jenkinson responded by producing *Mirour de l'Omme*, recently purchased by himself and presented to the library. It is an edifying but tiresome performance in thirty thousand lines, treating of the vices and virtues, the various classes of persons in the world, and the return of the sinner to his Creator, and concluding with a life of the Virgin. It is full of learning and not wholly devoid of poetry. Being composed in French it must have been intended for the more refined class of readers, and shows the persistency of French in courtly circles long after English had become the national speech. "The verses, however," says M. Jusserand, "have an unmistakably English rhythm, and may easily be distinguished from French verse of the Continent and from that of the earlier Anglo-Norman writers." The allegory seems a foreshadowing of Milton's, though he cannot have known the poem. Death is not with Gower begotten by the Devil upon Sin, but Death and Sin engender the seven cardinal vices, who are all personified, as are the Virtues also. Every estate of Man is passed in review and condemned. It seems rather surprising that Gower should have turned from an allegory like this to write of Love, though even here he merits Chaucer's epithet, the *moral* Gower.

"*Vox Clamantis*"

The same title might be earned for him by his Latin poem, *Vox Clamantis*, commencing with a description of the rising of the common people under Wat Tyler and other incendiaries in 1381, and progressing into a general indictment of the iniquities of all orders of society, up to the throne itself. The social revolt had evidently greatly alarmed Gower, but he is more indignant with the vices of the clergy and the upper classes generally, as the cause of so disagreeable an effect. Nothing can be more remote from the sunny optimism of Chaucer, the contemporaries hardly seem to belong to the same age or country. The poem is written in Latin elegiacs, and divided into seven books, the first of which, describing the insurrection, comprises nearly a fourth of the whole. This was commenced in 1381, soon after the disturbances, but, perhaps from occupation with the task which we shall shortly see assigned to him by the King, Gower proceeded slowly, and the poem was not completed until near the time of the deposition of Richard. After this event it was published with a dedication to Archbishop Arundel, which shows that the heads of the Church were not indisposed to receive representations on the need of ecclesiastical reform, so long as doctrines were not interfered with. It is a very curious and valuable performance, but the Latinity is poor, and it has little poetical merit. It is accompanied by *Chronica Tripartita*, a history of Richard's reign from

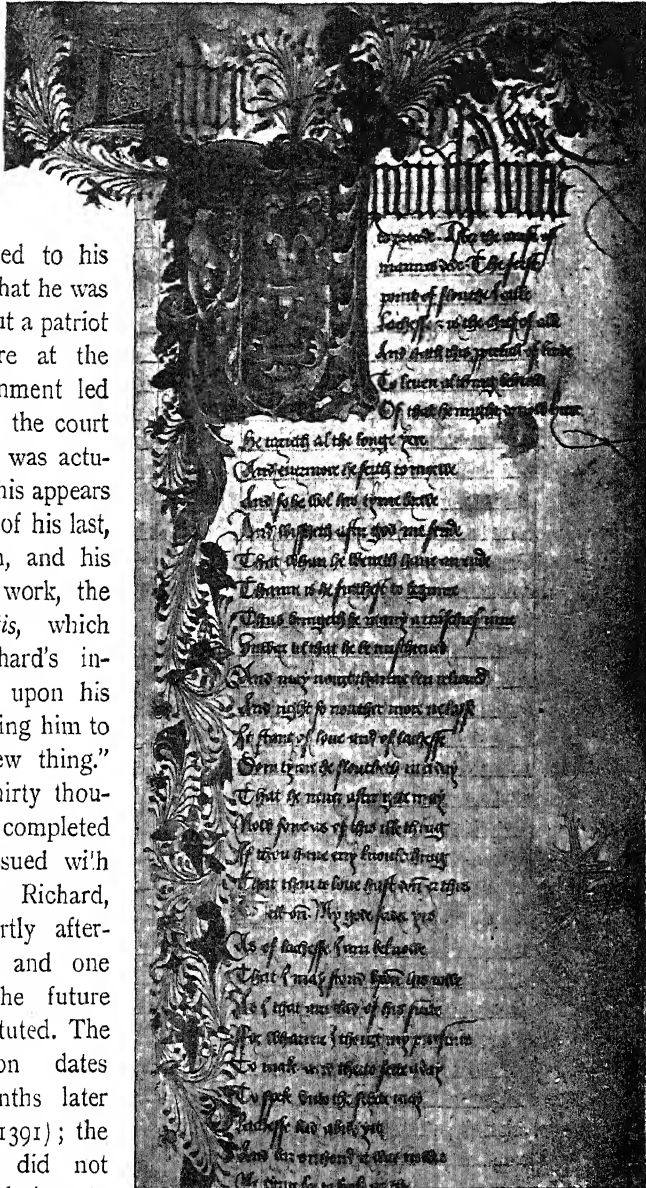
1386 to his deposition, in rhyming Latin hexameters, besides some minor pieces, all severely condemnatory of the unfortunate King.

Shakespeare, with a truer instinct than Gower, has made Richard II. such an object of compassion that Gower's harsh treatment of him does not recommend the poet himself to our sympathy.

It must be noted to his praise, however, that he was no time-server, but a patriot whose displeasure at the King's misgovernment led him to renounce the court favour which he was actually enjoying. This appears from the history of his last, his sole English, and his most important work, the *Confessio Amantis*, which arose from Richard's inviting the poet upon his barge and enjoining him to write "some new thing." The poem of thirty thousand lines was completed by 1390, and issued with a dedication to Richard, which was shortly afterwards removed, and one to Lancaster, the future Henry IV., substituted. The second recension dates from a few months later (before June 21, 1391); the poet, therefore, did not wait for a revolution to speak his mind, and must be allowed the credit of courage, while Richard is no less entitled to that of forbearance.

Before arriving at the poem itself we have to face a prologue conceived in the most pessimistic spirit. The time is out of joint, and no one is born to set it

"*Confessio Amantis*"



From Gower's "*Confessio Amantis*"

British Museum, Harl. MS. 7184

Prologue to the  
"*Confessio Amantis*"

right. It is a melancholy satisfaction to discover that complaints of competition and adulteration were as rife then as they can possibly be now, and that the agricultural labourers are as discontented as the new operative classes which did not exist in Gower's time, notwithstanding the peasants' recent acquisitions of wheaten bread, milk, and cheese, luxuries unknown to their ancestors. This agrees with the contemporary testimony of Piers Plowman, one nearer than Gower to the status of the labouring class, who almost regrets the time

Whiles hunger was her maister : there wolde none of hem chyde,  
Ne stryve ayeines his statut : so sternelich he looked.

The Church is corrupt ; professions and trades are dishonest ; strife and division reign among all orders of society ; the insoluble problem is how to make the lion lie down with the lamb. Happily the poet can always escape into an ideal world, and this gloomy portal conducts to a bright May morning where we encounter him walking in heaviness of spirit, indeed, but not for the world's sorrow but his own. Every bird, he reflects, has found its mate, but he is as far from his lady's favour as earth from heaven. In this mood, like Chaucer, whom he is doubtless imitating, he encounters Love and his Queen, and is maltreated by the god and comforted by the goddess, who bids him confess his sins against Love to "a priest of Venus." Gower, becoming conveniently stupid, professes himself unable to comprehend the instructions of this holy man except in a concrete form, and this clumsy contrivance introduces the narratives told by the priest in illustration of the transgressions of lovers, which display Gower at his best as a graceful, fluent, and occasionally powerful story-teller. There are no fewer than one hundred and twelve stories, mostly from classical mythology, such as the histories of Jason, Capaneus, Canace, Ceyx, Narcissus, Tereus ; others from Scripture, as Jephtha's daughter ; others from mediæval legend, like Apollonius and the examples of the *Gesta Romanorum*, or from actual history, like Alboin and Rosamond. In general, the collection may be regarded as an endeavour to fill the vacancy created by Chaucer's relinquishment of the *Legend of Good Women*, but the connection of the tales with love matters is not always very apparent. The story of Adrian and Bardus, for instance, is a vigorous illustration of the vice of ingratitude, but Adrian's unthankfulness is manifested towards one of his own sex, and he is by no means a second Jason. Two ecclesiastical histories are remarkable as evincing Gower's opinions on church matters. In one, following Dante, he brings in the apocryphal donation of Constantine to Pope Sylvester, not yet exploded by Laurentius Valla, as the source of all the corruptions of the Church. In the other, he exceptionally comes down to his own times to stigmatise Pope Boniface VIII.'s fraudulent acquisition of the Papacy by working on the superstitious fears of his predecessor Celestine, which, as well as his unhappy end, is related with sundry unhistorical aggravations.

On the whole, the *Confessio Amantis* may be pronounced a good example of narrative poetry, and less marred than might have been apprehended by the author's didactic purpose. He has, indeed, as Mr. Courthope remarks,

*General character of the  
"Confessio  
Amantis"*



"passed beyond the stage of art in which a story is told primarily for the sake of the moral it conveys : yet the moral is with him apparently quite as important as the tale." He is a man of books, while Chaucer is a man of the world, yet his cumbrous learning is often forgotten as his interest in his narrative kindles, and so long as his story is good he is not too careful whether it really fits in well with his moral purpose. Apart from narrative he is weak, the framework of his tales is pedantic and awkward, he indulges in long digressions for the mere sake of displaying his erudition, and the climax of absurdity is reached when the priest of Venus delivers a homily denying the existence and denouncing the worship of Venus herself.

Gower is too good a narrator to be exactly diffuse, but his octosyllabic couplet is unfavourable to condensation. It is therefore difficult to render him justice by extract within reasonable limits. We select an episode from a tale bearing much affinity to Boccaccio and Dryden's history of the *Spectre Knight*. Rosiphila, daughter of the King of Armenia, a princess rebellious to love, is brought to allegiance by a vision of a procession of fair ladies riding through a May landscape richly attired, whose train is brought up by a solitary lady poorly dressed and laden with halters. The happy dames, it is explained, have been eminent lovers, while their attendant is punished for her hardness of heart. She has, nevertheless, a golden bridle :

Now tell me then, I you beseech,  
Whereof that riché bridle serveth.  
With that her chere<sup>1</sup> away she swerveth,  
And gan to weep, and thus she told ;  
This bridle which ye now behold  
So rich upon my horse's head,  
Madam, afore, ere I was dead,  
When I was in my lusty life  
There fell into my heart a strife  
Of lové, which me overcome ;  
So that thereafter heed I nom,<sup>2</sup>  
And thoughte I woldé love a knight ;  
That lasted well a forténight ;  
For it no longer mighté last.  
But now, alas, too laté war  
That I ne hadde him loved ar.  
For death came so in hasté byme,  
Ere I thereto had any time  
That it ne mighté bin achieved.  
But for all that I am relieved  
Of that my will was good thereto,  
That Lové soffreth it be so  
That I shall such a bridle wear.  
Now have ye heard all mine answe.  
To God, madam, I you betake,<sup>3</sup>  
And warneth allé for my sake,  
Of Lové that they be not idle,  
And bid them think upon my bridle.  
And with that word all suddenly  
She passeth, as it were a sky,<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Face.<sup>2</sup> Took.<sup>3</sup> Commend.<sup>4</sup> Cloud.

All clean out of this lady's sight :  
 And tho for fear her heart afflite,  
 And saidé to herself, 'alas !  
 I am right in the samé cas.  
 But if I live after this day  
 I shall amend it, if I may.'  
 And thus homeward the lady went,  
 And changéd all her first intent  
 Within her heart, and gan to swear  
 That she no halters woldé bear.

It will be just to Gower to show him not relating a story but writing from his own mind. The thought of the following lines that the strife of the world can only be assuaged by some divine minstrel is beautiful, and like an echo of Plato, though Arion usurps the functions of Orpheus, who frequently appears in early Christian paintings as an emblem of the Saviour :

But wold God that now were on  
 Another such as Arion,  
 Which had a harp of such temprure,  
 And thereto of so good mesure  
 He sang, that he the bestés wild  
 Made of his noté tame and mild,  
 The hund in peace with the leoun,  
 The wolf in peace with the mouloun.  
 The hare in peace stood with the hound :  
 And every man upon this ground  
 Which Arion that timé heard,  
 Als wel the lord as the shepherd,  
 He brought them all in good accord .  
 So that the common with the lord  
 And lord with the common also  
 He sette in lové bothé two,  
 And put away melancholic.  
 That was a lusty<sup>1</sup> melody  
 When every man with other low :<sup>2</sup>  
 And if there weré such one now  
 Which couldé harpé as he dede,  
 He might avail in many a stede.<sup>3</sup>

*Gower and  
 Chaucer*

Gower's reputation stood high in his own day, and for nearly two centuries he was by many equalled with Chaucer. For the greater part of that period critical taste was very low in England, and the perception of poetical beauty well-nigh extinct. When these revived both poets were hidden beneath a veil of obsolete diction, which, lifted at last by criticism, revealed Chaucer fresh and blooming, Gower, in comparison, shrivelled and sapless. The recent growth of interest in him is not so much to be attributed to an enhanced estimate of his poetical merits as to a quickened perception of his importance for his times.

*Their mutual  
 relations*

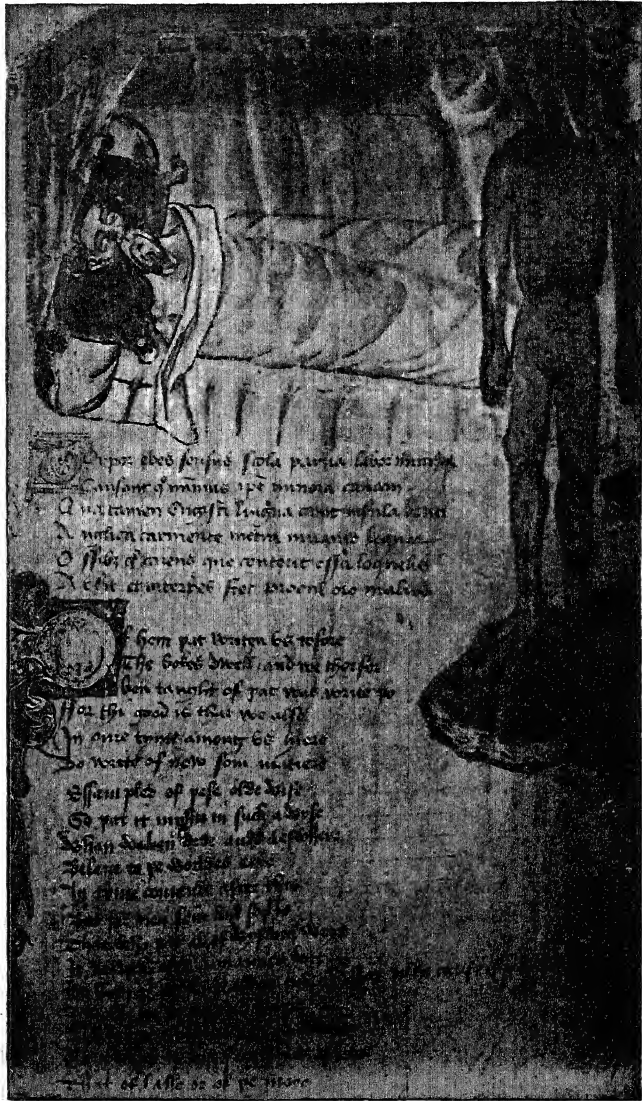
The relations between Gower and Chaucer were at one time most amicable. On Chaucer's departure on his mission to Italy in 1378 he left Gower as one of

<sup>1</sup> Delightful.

<sup>2</sup> Laughed.

<sup>3</sup> Place.

his "attornies" in England, and he commends, perhaps not quite seriously, *Troilus and Creseyde* not merely to his perusal but to his correction. Gower, on his part, in the first recension of his *Confessio Amantis*, brings in Venus herself to compliment Chaucer, but in the second recension (1391) all reference to Chaucer disappears except in one MS., where its preservation may be rather due to the transcriber than to the author. This is readily accounted for by an unkind thrust at Gower himself in the prologue to the *Man of Lawe's Tale*, which had been composed in the interim, where Chaucer congratulates himself on having written no stories turning upon incest, like those of Canace and Apollonius of Tyre, both of which, though Chaucer refrains from saying so, are related in the *Confessio Amantis*. But the attack itself has to be accounted for. No private cause is known, and it seems both needless and unworthy of



Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

From Gower's "*Confessio Amantis*," Harl. MS 3869

Chaucer to suppose him actuated by jealousy at Gower, not content with his French and Latin laurels, having come forward as a rival English poet in a work ostentatiously vying with *The Legend of Good Women*. It is more probably to be connected with the change in Gower's political views, which has already been referred to. After he had begun to write

as an admirer of Richard II., his perception of the weakness and peril of the King's rule had driven him into opposition. Chaucer, whose political insight was less acute, and whose ethical sentiment was less intense, and who, in 1390, was enjoying a lucrative place under the King, remained loyal to Richard, and estrangement must have been the almost inevitable consequence. The situation brings out the difference between the poets : Chaucer the artist, making the most of life as he sees it ; Gower the moralist, endeavouring to weigh its purpose and discriminate its right and wrong. Yet Gower is not entirely a didactic poet. He tells us himself that he aims at finding the middle way between Wisdom and Pleasure :

But for men saine, and sothe it is,  
That who that al of wisdom writ  
It dulleth ofte a mannés wit  
To hem that shall it all day rede ;  
For thilké cause, if that ye rede,  
I woldé go the middle way,  
And write a boke betwene the twey,  
Somewhat of lust,<sup>1</sup> somewhat of lore,  
That of the lesse or of the more  
Some man may like of that I write.

This purpose he undoubtedly achieved. He would have held a higher rank in the English Parnassus if all his poems had been composed in English. They might not have been better as poetry, but he would have appeared a more imposing figure from the sheer mass of his work. Yet the thirty thousand lines of the *Confessio Amantis* supply "lovers of poetry" with Keats' desideratum for them—"a little region to wander in, where they may pick and choose." This character applies only to the *Confessio Amantis*. The lovers of poetry, as such, will, his *balades* excepted, avoid Gower's French and Latin compositions, which are, nevertheless, more important for the student of his age. Here he may complain of neglect. It is strange that such a work as the *Vox Clamantis* should never have been edited until 1850. The complete edition of his works upon which Mr. Macaulay is now engaged will leave nothing to desire.

*Translations  
of Gower*

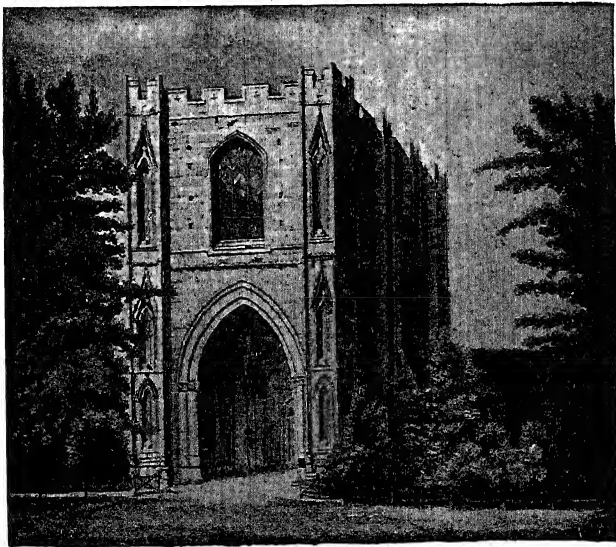
One special distinction of Gower's *Confessio Amantis* should not be overlooked : it was the first English poem to be translated into other languages. Versions appeared even in Spain and Portugal. Gower's celebrity as an English poet would be enhanced if some one with Mr. Andrew Lang's or Mr. John Payne's felicity in translating old French poetry would render his *balades* into our vernacular. The late Professor Henry Morley has given a graceful specimen :

Winter departs, and comes the flowery May,  
And round from cold to heat the seasons fly ;  
The bird that to its nest had lost the way  
Rebuilds it that it may rejoice thereby.

<sup>1</sup> Pleasure.

Like change in my love's world I now descry,  
 With such a hope I comfort myself here ;  
 And you, my lady, on this truth rely,  
 When grief departs the coming joys are near.

My lady sweet, by that which now I say  
 You may discover how my heart beats high,  
 That serves you and has served for many a day,  
 As it will serve you daily till I die.  
 Remember then, my lady, knowing why,  
 That my desire for you will never veer,  
 As God wills that it be, so be our tie :  
 When grief departs the coming joys are near  
 The day that news of you came where I lay  
 It seemed there was no grief could make men sigh



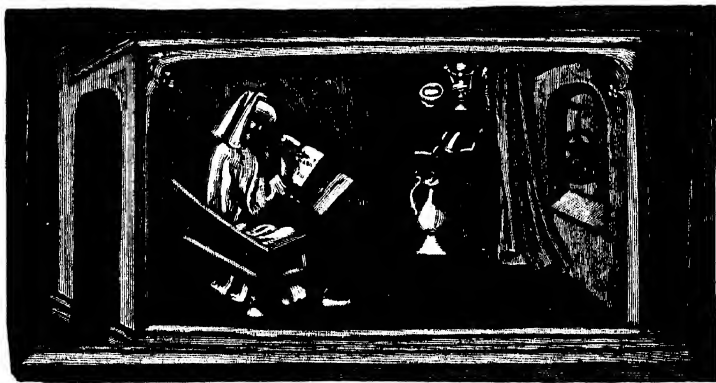
View of the Abbey, Bury St. Edmond  
 From "*History of St. Edmonsbury*," 1805

Wherefore of you, dear lady mine, I pray,  
 By your own message—when you will, not I  
 Send me what you think best as a reply,  
 Wherewith my heart can keep itself from fear ;  
 And, lady, search the reason of my cry,  
 When grief departs the coming joys are near.

O noble dame, to you this note shall hie,  
 And when God wills I follow to my dear.  
 This writing speaks and says, till I am by,  
 When grief departs the coming joys are near.

Chaucer's mantle fell upon no one, but he has two train-bearers among *John L.* whose chief merits it is that they loyally present themselves in this capacity. JOHN LYDGATE and THOMAS HOCCELEVE, both of whom lived from about 1370 to about 1450, profess themselves his disciples, and continue his tradition as it is given them to do. The Muse's largesse to either is certainly not over

bounteous, except in point of fluency and facility. The last reproach to be addressed to either of them is Byron's to the bard of *The Pleasures of Hope*. "Campbell's Hippocrene is somewhat drouthy." If only their effusions were really derived from the *fons caballinus*! but this is far more than can be asserted as regards Hoccleve's. With Lydgate the case is somewhat different. It is not wonderful that his stupendous faculty for prosing in verse should have provoked some good critics into denying him the title of poet, but they have overlooked his possession of an infallible criterion of the poetical gift. He is frequently under the influence of a genuine musical inspiration. When not thus upborne his versification is liable to be incorrect, especially in his heroic couplets; but there are many sustained passages vibrating with the melody which distinguishes the poet from the proseman, irrespective of the actual merit of his matter. This cannot usually be rated very highly in



Lydgate in his Study

*From the fifteenth-century MS. in the British Museum*

Lydgate's case, except for his charming gift of natural description, to which we shall have to render justice. Yet, even when he has little to express but commonplace, his metre frequently exalts him into poetry :

O thoughtful hearté, plunged in distress  
 With slumber of sloth this hugé winter night,  
 Out of the sleep of mortal heaviness  
 Awake again and look upon the light  
 Of thilké star that with her beamés bright  
 And with the shining of her shenés merrie,  
 Is wont to gladden all our hemispheré.

This star in beauty passeth Pleiades  
 Both of sky risyng and of shenés clear,  
 Bootes, Arcturus, and als Iades,  
 And Esperus whanné it doth appear :  
 For this is Spica with her brighté spear  
 That toward eve, at midnight and at morrow,  
 Down from the heaven adaweth<sup>1</sup> all our sorrow

<sup>1</sup> Scares away.

And dryeth up the bitter tearés wete  
 Of Aurorá after the morrow gray  
 That she in weeping doth on flowers flete,<sup>1</sup>  
 In lusty April and in freshé May,  
 And cometh Phœbus the bright sunné's day  
 With his wain gold-yborned<sup>2</sup> bright and fair,  
 To enchace the mystés of our cloudy air.

These stanzas from the beginning of *The Life of Our Lady (Stella Maris)* manifestly proceed from a singer and not from a mechanical versifier. After a while the music flags, and the poem with it.

Lydgate is, perhaps, the only considerable English poet who has followed the monastic rule of life. He was born at a small Suffolk village near Newmarket, of the same name as his own, about 1370. He was probably educated at the monastery of Bury St. Edmunds, to which he afterwards belonged, for hardly any other circumstance would account for a boy so antipathetic to study and good behaviour, as in his *Testament* he describes himself to have been, becoming a monk. He received the minor orders in 1389. According to his own account, his deportment even then was not edifying until he was converted under a sudden impulse imparted at the sight of a crucifix. This may be assumed to have been before he received priest's orders in 1397, and his acquaintance with classical writers, even though much of his erudition may be second-hand, seems to indicate that he made up for early idleness by study. He seems to have been under but slight monastic restraint, spending much time in London, where he made the acquaintance of Chaucer, whom he holds up as the supreme English poet :

Whom all this land of right ought to preferre,  
 Sith of our language he was the lode-sterre.

The poems of Lydgate which manifest most traces of Chaucer's influence—*The Temple of Glass*, *The Flower of Curtesie*, *The Complaint of the Black Knight*—were probably composed during Chaucer's lifetime, or soon afterwards.

We shall have to speak further of the extraordinary decay of literary genius which befell not only England but all Europe, except Scotland, after the beginning of the fifteenth century, and can only remark here that, rate Lydgate as low as we may, his claim to rank as the foremost living English poet for nearly half a century cannot be contested. He would undoubtedly have filled the office of laureate, had such then existed in England ; a large portion of his poems are composed at the request of kings, princes, governors, abbots, mayors, and dames of high degree. The most important of these are *The Troy Book*, written between 1412 and 1420 at the command of Henry V., *The Life of Our Lady*, undertaken immediately afterwards at the same august prompting, and *The Falls of Princes*, after Boccaccio, composed nearly twenty years later by the injunction of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, the chief English patron of literature in his age. He devised masks and pageants, and wrote occasional poems on state affairs. He describes himself in middle life as a lean monk

*Lydgate's  
poems written  
to order*

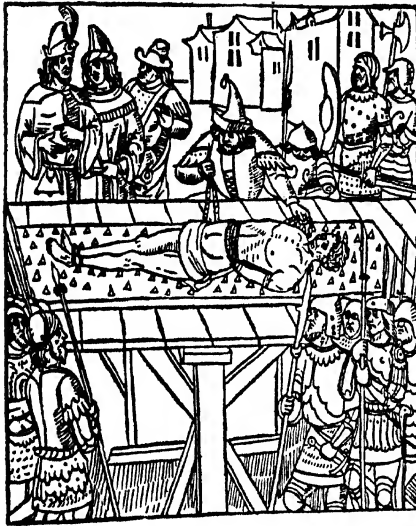
<sup>1</sup> Drop

<sup>2</sup> Burnished.

with pallid complexion, empty trunk, and threadbare hood ; he nevertheless held lands on lease, and was sufficiently independent to resign the priory of Hatfield, to which he had been promoted, but which did not suit him, and return to his monastery at Bury. He died in or about 1451, rhyming to the last.

*His merits as  
a descriptive  
poet*

The fecundity of Lydgate certainly seems appalling, but many of his longest poems are translations or paraphrases. This is the case with the longest of any, the *Falls of Princes*, written, as above mentioned, at the instance of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, which is a rendering in rhyme royal of Laurent de Premierfait's French translation of Boccaccio's *De Casibus Illu-*



From Lydgate's "*Fall of Princes*," printed by Pynson in 1494

*trium Virorum*, and comprises more than thirty-six thousand lines. Some passages have genuine poetical beauty. Warton, a fine connoisseur of our ancient literature and not the least among its restorers, quotes with high praise for its harmony a couplet descriptive of the portents which preceded the strife of Cæsar and Pompey :

Serpents and adders, scaled silver-bright,  
Were over Rome seen flying all the night.

The fifteen thousand heroic couplets of the *Troy Book*, though not precisely a translation, are mainly paraphrased from Guido delle Colonne. Such works made little demand upon the poet's invention, and his talent is principally shown

in his descriptive passages. Here, within limits, he is a master. Lines like these immediately transport one into the thick of tumultuous conflict :

But strokys felle, that men might herden ryng  
On bassinets, the fieldes round about,  
So cruelly that the fyre springé out  
Among the tuftés brodé, bright and shene  
Of foyle of gold, of feathers white and grene.

The last three lines must have been consciously or unconsciously in the mind of the author of the passage already cited from the author of *The Flower and the Leaf*. Can he have been Lydgate himself ?

The description of the architecture of Troy as rebuilt for Priam before the Trojan War is particularly interesting, and, as not the slightest attention is paid to the truth of history, brings the mediæval city before us in all the splendour that the poet's imagination could bestow. A fragment of his picture may still be beheld in the "rows" of Chester. Lydgate excels principally, however, in the delineation of simple natural phenomena, especially the shows of the sun





**T**he noble story to putte in remembrance  
 Of saynt Edmunde martyr made a kyng  
 With his support my stile I wol auance  
 First to compile after my kynnyng  
 His glorious lif his burthe and his hymnyng  
 And be dycent how that he that was so good  
 Was in sapome born of the roial blood

Lydgate presenting his Poem to the King.

[Harleian MS. 2278, British Museum.]



and the atmosphere. "The colour of our poet's mornings is often remarkably rich and splendid," says Warton, quoting the following passage in illustration :

When that the rowés<sup>1</sup> and the rayés red,  
Eastward to us full early ginnen spread  
Even at the twilight in the dawénynge,  
When that the lark of custom ginneth synge,  
For to saluë in her heavenly laye,  
The lusty goddess of the morrowe graye,  
I mean Aurora, which afore the sun  
Is wont to enchace the blacké skyé dun,  
And all the darkness of the dimmy night,  
And fresh Phœbus, with comfort of his light,  
And with the brightness of his beamés shene  
Hath overgilt the hugé hillés grene ;  
And flourés eke, agayne the summer tide,  
Upon their stalks gan pleyn their leavés wide.

Such passages, of which there are many, show that Lydgate could on occasion write well in the heroic couplet, and it is rather to his honour than otherwise if for this he needed the impulse of genuine interest in his subject. His versification, the truest index of the poet's feeling, kindles into melody when he writes of nature, and drags when he puts history into rhyme. It cannot be doubted that the author of the following description in *The Complaint of the Black Knight* must have had a thorough enjoyment of the country :

And by a river forth I gan costey  
Of water clear as beryl or crystal,  
Till at the last I found a little way  
Toward a park, enclosed with a wall  
In compass round, and by a gaté small  
Whoso that woldé freely mighté goon  
Into this park, walléd with grené stoon.  
  
And in I went to hear the birdés' song,  
Which on the branches both in plain and vale  
So loudly sung that all the woodé rong  
Like as it shouldé shiver in pieces smale,  
And as methoughté that the nightingale  
With so great might her voicé gan outrest,  
Ryght as her heart for lové woldé brest.  
  
The soyl was pleyne, smoothe, and under soft,  
All overspread with tapetes that Nature  
Had made herself, celured<sup>2</sup> eke aloft,  
With bowés grene, the floures for to sure  
That in their beauty they may long endure  
From all assault of Phœbus fervent fere  
Which in his speré so hot shone and clere.  
  
Then sawe I eke the freshé hawethorne,  
In whité motley, that so swete doth smell,  
Ash, fir and oak, with many a young acorn,  
And many a tree moré than I can tell,  
And me befor I see a little well

<sup>1</sup> Streaks of light.

<sup>2</sup> Ceiled.

That had his coursé, as I gan behold,  
Under a hill with quické stremés cold.

The gravel gold, the water pure as glass,  
The bankés round the well environing,  
And soft as veluet the yongé grass  
That therefor full lustily gan spring,  
The sute of trees abouté compassing  
Her shadow casté, closing the well round,  
And all the herbés growing on the ground.

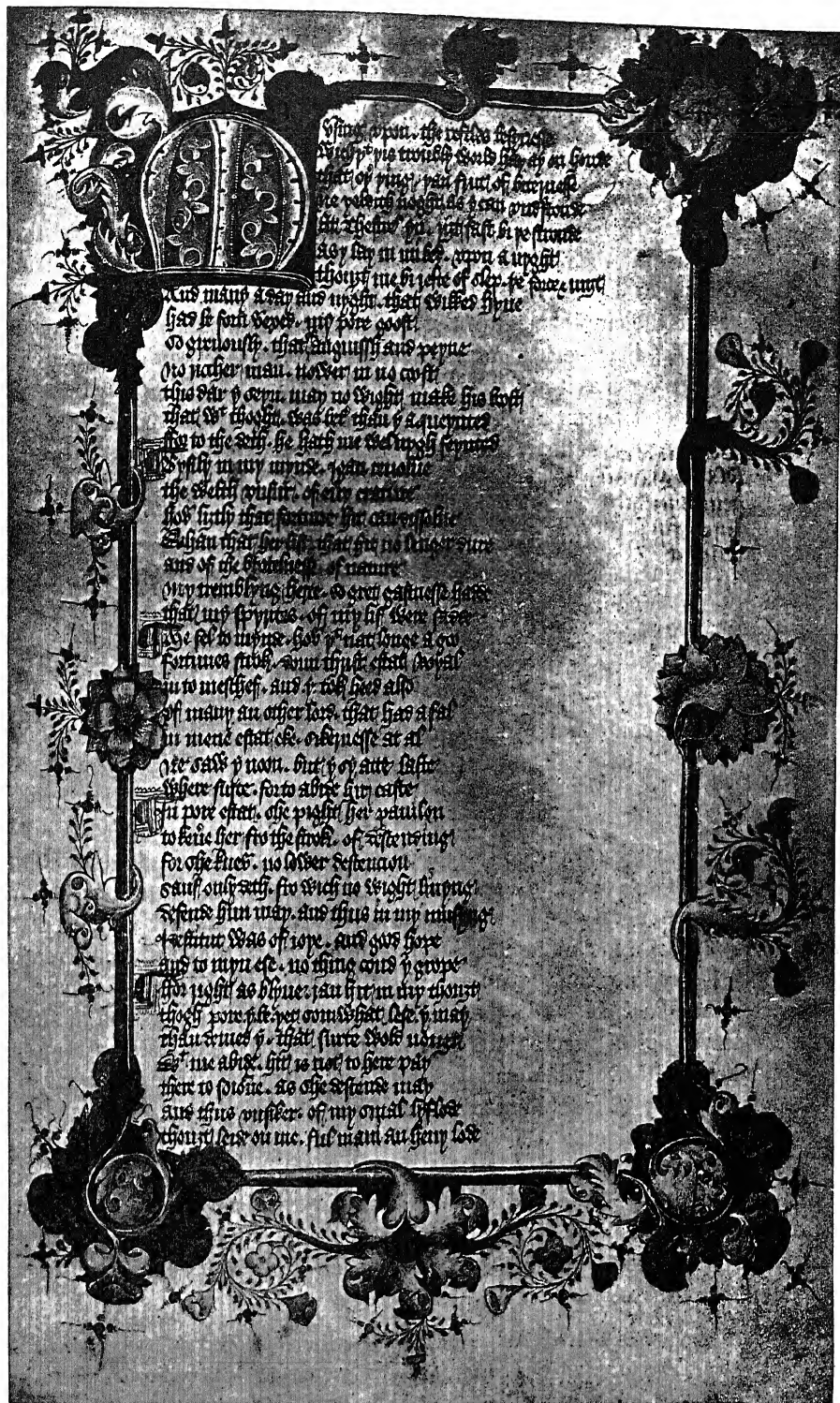
*Lydgate's  
familiar  
poetry*

Lydgate, it will be remarked, is enough of an observer of Nature to make the nightingale sing by day. The whole poem, as well as this description, is imitated from Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*, and it is interesting to compare the different manner of the two poets, Lydgate painting a rich landscape by many elaborate touches, Chaucer producing a general impression by a few careless strokes. It, as well as other pieces of Lydgate's, appears as Chaucer's in the early editions of the latter's works. *The Story of Thebes* was designed as an additional Canterbury Tale, and written about 1420. A general enumeration of Lydgate's works would exceed our limits, nor is it possible to discriminate with certainty between the genuine and the spurious. A large proportion are no more than the work of a poetical journeyman, executing commissions for patrons. It may, at all events, be said that no other writer gives so good an idea of what the readers of that day cared to read. One class of his poems, nevertheless, is really original and peculiar, the lively satirical pieces in which he hits off the humour of his age. Such are his *Balade of the Times*, the *Description of His Lady*, and especially the *London Lack Penny*, pungently but good-humouredly depicting the inconveniences of a short purse in a great city:

Then unto Cornhill anon I yode  
Where was much stolen gear among.  
I saw where hung up mine own hoode  
That I had lost among the throng:  
To buy my own hood I thought it wrong,  
I knew it as well as I did my crede,  
But for lack of money I could not speed.

The taverner took me by the sleeve,  
"Sir," sayth he, "will you our wine essay?"  
I answered, that cannot much me grieve,  
A penny can do no more than it may.  
I drank a pint and for it did pay,  
Yet sore a hungered from thence I yede,  
And lacking money I could not speed.

Then hyed I me to Billingsgate,  
And one cried, "Oh! O! go we hence!"  
I prayed a bargeman for Goddés sake  
That he would spare me my expense.  
"Thou scap'st not here," quod he, "under twopence,  
I list not yet bestow any alms dede:"  
Thus lacking money I could not speed.



From Lydgate's "Story of Thebes"

British Museum. Add. MSS 18632

It seems remarkable that a ferryman's toll should have been twice the price of a pint of wine. The ballad, if really Lydgate's, which has been doubted, probably belongs to an early period of his life, before he had gained the favour and pursued the monies of kings and princes.

*Thomas  
Hoccleve*

We have spoken of Lydgate and Hoccleve as Chaucer's train-bearers, but must add that there is a great difference in the manner in which they respectively acquit themselves of their function. Hoccleve's poetical claims are far inferior to Lydgate's; it might be difficult to establish his title to any except such as the employment of rhyme and metre may confer. It is true, as a critic remarks, that he has refrained from afflicting the world with such a mass of dreary verse as it has received from Lydgate, but neither has he given it any such good poetry as Lydgate has done. He manifests no trace of Lydgate's talent for natural description, nor of the delight in natural beauty which prompted it; and this absence of inspiration implies a corresponding absence of melody. He apologises for this himself, admitting "how unconyngly my book is metred." Yet he has two marked advantages over Lydgate, though these do not concern his character as a poet. One is the more evident fervour of his devotion to his master, Chaucer. If Lydgate does well in this respect, Hoccleve does better; his references to Chaucer are much more numerous than Lydgate's, reveal a much closer personal intimacy, and are marked by deeper feeling. He has a clear perception of Chaucer's rank among his contemporaries and of the void which he has left. Death, he thinks,

Might have tarried her vengeance awhile,  
Till that som man had egal to thee be.

Hoccleve's other advantage over Lydgate springs, paradoxically, out of his inferiority both in social position and in character. Both poets subsisted in a great degree upon the bounty of their patrons, but Lydgate accepted commissions like a fashionable painter, while Hoccleve sold his poems ready made. He could not consequently sit down to plan out poems on the scale of Lydgate's *Troy Book*, but keeps the wolf from the door by a succession of short pieces upon topics of general interest, for which he may anticipate customers. He is consequently very tame and conventional, but we learn more about the London of Henry V. from him than from his rival, if less about the Thebes of Eteocles and Polynices.

*His life and  
character*

Hoccleve was born, probably, at the village of the same name in Bedfordshire about 1370. He obtained a clerkship in the Privy Seal Office at an early age. Almost all that we know of his life and circumstances is derived from his penitent and biographical effusion, *La Male Regle*, thus amusingly condensed by his editor, Dr. Furnivall:

When he got free and was his own master he naturally kicked up his heels, and at eighteen he seems to have bloomed into a smart Government clerk, waiting for a benefice that he never got. He no doubt jetted along the Strand in fine weather in the fashionable wide-sleeved cloak of the time, down to the Privy Seal Office in the Palace of Westminster, where he would see the Prince of Wales and the nobles mentioned in his

works, and have a chance of talking to them. As the Strand was not paved till 1533, in winter the way was deep, and Hoccleve took a boat from Chester's Inn (Somerset House) to Westminster, and there worked more or less. When young he was free with his money, stuffed and drank at the cook-shops and taverns at Westminster, paying whatever was asked, and instead of going back to the office after dinner went for an outing on the river. The waterman, seeing he was weak, called him "maister," which tickled his vanity—it was a term applied only to gentlemen—and drew money from him. Then he would adjourn to Paul's Head Tavern, close by the Cathedral, where he'd treat and kiss the girls, or to his dinner club in the Temple, and either at one of these places or at his rooms in Chester's Inn, sit up drinking all night and be loth to rise in the morning. And so the fun went on, as long as Hoccleve had or could borrow money. Then came illness and debt, his rents but four pounds a year, his earnings nothing, his pension in arrear, and his salary too.

Add in process of time a wife to be kept who did not model herself upon Griselda, and it will not seem extraordinary that a considerable portion of Hoccleve's poems should be entreaties for the more punctual payment of his dues, or pecuniary assistance in some other form. He recommended himself to the powers that were by writing bitterly against the Lollard reformer, Sir John Oldcastle; by frequently inscribing poems to the King and the Duke of Bedford; and by bringing French politics into his general advice to rulers, *De Regimine Principum*. The marriage of Henry V. and the French Princess Catherine is advocated as a healing measure, and the two nations are exhorted, as soon as they have made peace between themselves,

*His poverty  
and time-  
serving*

Upon the miscreantes to maké werre  
And them unto the faith of Christ to bring—

a sincere aspiration both of Henry IV., who was led by a misunderstood prophecy to expect to die in the Holy Land, and of Henry V., who professed with his dying breath his ambition to have rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem. The *De Regimine* was written in 1411–12, just before the death of the former and the accession of the latter monarch. It is the most important of Hoccleve's works in compass and subject, but less valuable in every point of view than *La Male Regle*, written about 1407. He had acquired some poetical celebrity before this date by his *Letter of Cupid* about 1402. Here the imitation of Christine de Pisan raises him in some measure above himself, although the sentiment is far in advance of the diction and the metre :

O ! every man ought have a herté tendre  
Unto woman, and deem her honourable,  
Whether her shape be either thick or slender,  
Or she be bad or good, this is no fable.  
Every man wots, that wit hath reasonable,  
That of a woman he descended is :  
Then it is shame of her to speak amiss.

A wicked tree may fruté none forth-bring,  
For such the fruté is, as is the tree ;  
Take heed of whom thou took thy begynnyng,  
Let thy mothér be miror unto thee,

Honour her if thou wilt honouréd be.  
 Despisé thou her nat, in no manere,  
 Lest that thereby thy wickedness appear.

In 1424 Hoccleve received a pension chargeable upon the Priory of Southwick, in Hampshire, and it may be hoped that this rendered him comfortable for his latter years, since he appears to have left off importuning patrons, unless by manuscript copies of his works written for presentation, some by his own hand, several of which are extant. One contains the best portrait of Chaucer that we possess. About 1449 he addressed a ballad to Richard Duke of York, and must have died shortly afterwards. Dr. Furnivall and Mr. Gollancz are at present editing his works for the Early English Text Society.

*Prose compositions of the period*

In the early stages of any literature poetry is certain to be more advanced than prose, for the necessity of conforming to rules of metre, and of aiming at some kind of poetical form, lifts the lowest writer in some measure above his natural level; while for a time the purposes of prose seem adequately served by ordinary colloquial speech. The first literary use to which prose is put is likely to be the expression of emotion, which we have seen admirably accomplished by Richard Rolle. Logic, rhetoric, artistic narrative, or verbal painting are much later acquisitions, of which the prose of Chaucer's time affords little trace. Unable to produce original treatises of much worth, English prosaists generally occupied themselves with translation. Infinitely the most important of their labours is the work of Wycliffe and the group around him in rendering the Scriptures, which we must reserve for another chapter. No less a person than Chaucer, however, occupied himself with translation, in his version of Boethius and in his two prose contributions to the *Canterbury Tales*. An extract from the *Parson's Tale* will exhibit his command of both the homely energy and the sweet artless rhythm which ought to characterise a youthful literature:

Certes also that whoso prideth him in the goods of grace is eke an outrageous fool; for thilke gifts of grace that should have turned him to goodness and medicine turneth him to venom and confusion, as saith St. Gregory. Certes also whoso prideth him in the goods of fortune, he is a full great fool; for some time is a man a great lord by the morning that is a caitiff and a wretch ere it be night; and some time the riches of a man is cause of his death; and sometime the delyce of a man is cause of his grievous malady, through which he dieth. Certes the commendation of the people is sometime full false and full brittle for to trust; this day they praise, to-morrow they blame. God woot, desire to have commendation of the people hath caused death of many a busy man.

*Travels of Sir John Mandeville*

A century later Chaucer might have been a great prose writer, but the art of style was too undeveloped in his day, and English prose had hardly yet been applied to any strictly literary purpose. Abroad it was otherwise, and perhaps it was only to be expected that the first important work in English prose should be a translation. The example of employing prose for secular narrative and description was set by a work naturalised in England about the time of Chaucer's death, *THE TRAVELS OF SIR JOHN MANDEVILLE*.

This mendacious and pseudonymous production is, nevertheless, one of



the most remarkable books in our literature ; a landmark as respects its style, its subject, and its universal popularity throughout Europe ; a problem as regards the questions as to whether it can be rightly considered as belonging to English literature at all, to the author's identity, to his nationality, to the derivation of his materials, and to his exact position in the republic of letters, whether as traveller, romancer, or simple plagiarist. A great romancer he is undoubtedly in the guise of a veracious narrator, but are his tales his own ? A great benefactor he undoubtedly is to English literature through his being, as Professor Saintsbury tersely puts the matter, the first English prose writer who set the example of a prose style. But is not this style the creation of some anonymous translator ? It is to be feared that these questions must for the most part be decided in a sense unfavourable to this Junius of the fourteenth century, who appears unable to establish his claim to the appellation by which, nevertheless, when criticism has done its worst, he will for ever be known.

Mandeville's book, it is almost needless to inform the reader, is a book of Eastern travel. It will be convenient to state the questions relating to the personality of the author and the composition of his work before treating of this from a strictly literary point of view.

The book whose extraordinary marvels have justly procured for the writer the same reputation as that afterwards unjustly conferred on Ferdinand Mendez

Pinto, was without doubt originally written in French. It therefore belongs more properly to French than to English literature, but, having taken no notable rank in, and exerted no special influence upon the literature of France, while it forms an epoch in the literary history of England, it may justly be reckoned among English books, provided that the nationality of the author can be shown to be English. This the book distinctly asserts, professing to be the work of Jehan de Mandeville or John Maundeville, an English knight born at St. Albans, who departed on his travels in 1322, and wrote his account of them at Liège in 1356, as a relief from the pangs of gout. That the travels were really written at Liège seems highly probable, for until 1798 a tomb existed in the church of the Guillemins at Liège, with the epitaph of "Joannes de Mandeville



John Mandeville

From "*The Travels*" printed in Lyons, circa 1485

*Problems relating to Mandeville and his book*

alias dictus ad Barbam" (an alias to be borne in mind, as we shall see), "de Anglia, medicinae professor . . . qui, toto quasi orbe lustrato, Leodii diem vitae suae clausit extremum, A.D. McccLXXII." The Latinity seems to savour of a later time than Mandeville's, yet may well represent an earlier inscription, and the assertion made seems sufficiently distinct; yet the arms related to have been engraved on a brass plate upon the tomb are not those of any branch of the



"A Tomb with a reclining Figure (Aristotle) in front of a City built upon an Island"

*From a fifteenth-century Flemish MS. of Mandeville's "Travels"*

Mandeville family; the resident at Liège cannot be identified with any known Mandeville; and his story is perplexingly mixed up with that of another person whose existence is better established.

*Probable identity of Mandeville*

Apart from the sepulchral inscription, the only testimony we have of the existence of Mandeville is that of Jean d'Outremeuse or Des Preis, who wrote towards the end of the fourteenth century a *Myroure des Histoires*, or general chronicle, from the fourth book of which, while it was yet extant in the

seventeenth century, Louis Abry copied the statement that in 1372 there died at Liège a very distinguished man who had passed under the name of "Jean de Bourgogne dit a la barbe," but who had revealed to D'Outremeuse on his death-bed that he was in reality a banished English nobleman, "Messire Jean de Mandeville, chevalier, comte de Montfort en Angleterre." This personage, having had the misfortune to kill another nobleman, bound himself as a penance to traverse the three parts of the then known world. He settled at Liège in 1343, passing under the name of Jean de Bourgogne, and approving himself a great naturalist, philosopher, and astrologer, which agrees with the description of "Joannes de Mandeville alias dictus ad Barbam" in the Latin epitaph above quoted, as a physician. D'Outremeuse, then, if he can be relied upon, regarded Jean de Mandeville and Jean de Bourgogne or de la Barbe as the same person. Which was the real traveller? Did Bourgogne assume the character of Mandeville? or did Mandeville lurk in the disguise of Bourgogne? or are they both aliases of D'Outremeuse himself? The Latin version of Mandeville's travels seeks to solve the problem by making Mandeville speak of having met Bourgogne in Egypt, and again at Liège, and of having there composed his work at Bourgogne's suggestion. But this Latin is clearly a translation from the French, for Mandeville begins by excusing himself for writing in French instead of Latin, and passages absent from the French text, as this is, must be regarded as interpolated. Apart from any connection with Mandeville, and supposing that Bourgogne is not a pseudonym of D'Outremeuse, we have evidence of Bourgogne's existence in a treatise on the plague written by him at Liège in 1365, and now extant in several languages, but the epitaph and D'Outremeuse's notice alike identify Mandeville with Bourgogne. It should seem probable, therefore, that Bourgogne is the substance and Mandeville the shadow; while a very curious piece of testimony, unconnected with Liège or D'Outremeuse, goes far towards enabling us to claim the author of the *Travels*, after all, for an Englishman. In the epilogue to his work, as already mentioned, Mandeville states that he left England in 1322. In that year John de Burgoyne, chamberlain to John, Baron de Mowbray, was in all probability compelled to fly his country. His master, who had in the preceding year taken part in a rising against the King's favourites, the Despencers, was executed upon their restoration to power in 1322; Burgoyne's own pardon for his share in previous transactions was revoked; he would have every reason to disappear from England, and it is quite conceivable that he may have found it convenient to pass for a time under another name. This may very well have been Mandeville, as the Mandevilles were enemies of Edward II.'s favourites, and in France *Burgoyne* would easily become Bourgogne. On the whole, though certainty is not attainable, there seems a reasonable probability that "Joannes de Mandeville, miles," is to be identified with "Joannes ad Barbam, medicus," and that the latter was what the former claimed to be, an Englishman of good family, while the distinction of being the first really good English prose writer, or, as it has been too magniloquently expressed, "the father of English prose," belongs not to him but to his anonymous English translator. The three English and the

five Latin versions are all evidently made from the French original, and in no case by the author himself, containing errors which he could not have committed. The standard Latin version was made at Liège, a strong confirmation of the author's and D'Outremeuse's statements that he dwelt in that city. The other four were made in England, a good proof that his work attracted special attention in this country, and that he was regarded as an Englishman. England also has more vernacular versions than any other country, while so great was the popularity of the book that translations appeared in all the chief European languages, and even in Bohemian and Irish. All translations except the Latin, so far as the evidence of the extant manuscripts extends, date from the fifteenth century. The earliest manuscript of the original French with a date was written in 1371, which agrees well with Mandeville's statement that he wrote his book in 1356.

*His mendacity and plagiarism*

There was no reason against Burgoyne, supposing him to be the author, employing the name of Mandeville if he thought fit : and a conclusive reason for his adopting some pseudonym may be found in a circumstance not creditable to him, the mendacity of his narrative. It is doubly unveracious, not only as being replete with fictions, but with fictions plagiarised from other writers. It actually transfers Caesar's description of Britain to the Far East. It professes to be the work of an eye-witness, but, in fact, almost everything in it is derived from some older traveller or historian : and it would be impossible to prove that the author had seen any of the countries which he claims to have visited, though it is not improbable that he may have had some personal acquaintance with Egypt and Syria. To have published his book under his own name would therefore have been to have exposed himself to the awkward questions and damaging criticisms of *bonâ fide* travellers, from which he prudently screened himself by a pseudonym.

The following analysis of Mandeville's travels, abridged from the article upon him in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* by Colonel Yule and Mr. E. W. B. Nicholson (who was the first to discover his connection with D'Outremeuse), shows both the subject and the sources of his book :

- CIIAP      Prologue.
- I.-III. The way to Constantinople, the Greek Islands.
  - IV.-V. Constantinople, Rhodes, Cyprus, Egypt, the Sinaitic peninsula, mostly derived from the German traveller Boldensele.
  - V.-X. Palestine, the most original part of the work, but indebted to Boldensele.
  - XI. Syria and Tartary, the latter not from personal experience.
  - XII. The Saracens and their religion, mainly from Boldensele.
  - XIII.-XX. Journey eastward, mainly from Odoric.
  - XXI. Tartar history, mainly from Haytor the Armenian.
  - XXII. The court of the great Khan, mainly from Odoric.
  - XXIII. Customs of the Tartars, chiefly from Carpini.
  - XXIV.-XXX. Chiefly romantic and fabulous matter about Prester John, the Old Man of the Mountain, the Tartarian lamb, the Valley Perilous, and the like, principally from Odoric, with a large admixture from other sources.

It is probable that Mandeville was not always acquainted at first hand with the authorities from whom he plagiarised, but knew some of them only in the

*Speculum* of Vincent de Beauvais. Tried by modern standards, he must be pronounced a dishonest writer. His merit is to have condensed and brought to a focus much of the Oriental lore, true and fabulous, which before him was floating about in a diffused condition.

The best compendious information respecting Mandeville will be found in the article in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* and in the article in the *Dictionary*



Astrologers on Mount Athos

*From a fifteenth-century Flemish MS. of Mandeville's "Travels"*

of *National Biography* by Dr. G. F. Warner, who first identified him with Burgoyne. Dr. Warner has also edited in sumptuous style and with abundant illustration the English translation preserved in the Egerton manuscript in the British Museum, which, according to Dr. Vogels, who has devoted especial attention to the subject of English translations, is an endeavour to restore the first English translation made from the Latin. A later version, coming directly from the French original, has superior claims to

the position of a standard text. Our extracts are taken from the modernised edition of Mr. A. W. Pollard.

#### THE KHAN OF TARTARY ESCAPES BY HELP OF AN OWL.

Afterward it befell upon a day that the Can rode with a few memie for to behold the strength of the country that he had won. And so befell that a great multitude of his enemies met with him, and for to give good example of hardiness to his people, he was the first that fought, and in the midst of his enemies encountered, and there he was cast from his horse, and his horse slain, and when his folk saw him at the earth, they were all abashed and weened that he had been dead, and flew every one, and their enemies after them and chased them, but they wist not that the emperor was there. And when the enemies were far pursuing the chase, the emperor hid him in a thick wood. And when they were come again from the chase they went and sought the woods if any of them had been hid in the thick of the woods; and many they found and slew them anon. So it happened that as they went marching towards the place that the emperor was, they saw an owl sitting upon a tree above him; and then they said amongst them that there was no man because they saw that bird there, and so they went their way; and thus escaped the emperor from death. And then he went privily all by night till he came to his folk that were glad of his coming, and made great thankings to God Immortal, and to that bird by whom their lord was saved. And therefore principally above all fowls of the world they worship the owl; and when they have any of their feathers they keep them full precious instead of relics, and bear them upon their heads with great reverence, and they hold themselves blessed and safe from all perils while that they have them together, and therefore they bear their feathers upon their heads.

Every one will be reminded of the story of Mahomet and the spider. This was most likely the invention of a romancer; but it may be suspected that the Tartar tale was framed to account for the veneration paid by some tribe to the owl, a relic of animal worship of which they had become ashamed.

#### THE IMPRISONED JEWS OF THE TEN TRIBES.

In the same region be the mountains of Caspian that men clepe Uber in the country. Between those mountains the Jews of ten lineages be enclosed, that men clepe Goth and Magoth, and they may not go out on no side. There were enclosed twenty-two kings with their people, that dwelled between the mountains of Scythia. There King Alexander chased them between these mountains, and then he thought for to enclose them through work of his men. But when he saw that he might not do it, he bring it to an end, he prayed to God of Nature that He would perform that that he had begun. And all were it so that he was a Paynim and not worthy to be heard, yet God of his grace closed the mountains together, so that they dwell there all fast locked and enclosed with high mountains all about, save only on one side, and on that side is the sea of Caspian.

And yet, nathless, men say that they shall go out in the time of Anti-Christ, and that they shall make great slaughter of Christian men. And therefore all the Jews that dwell in all lands learn always to speak Hebrew, in hope that when the other Jews shall go out that they may understand their speech, and to lead them into Christendom for to destroy the Christian people. For the Jews say that they know full well by their prophecies that they of Caspia shall go out, and spread throughout all the world, and that the Christian men shall be under their subjection as long as they have been in subjection of them.

And if that ye wit how that they shall find their way, after that I have heard say I shall tell you.

In the time of Anti-Christ a fox shall make there his train, and mine an hole where King Alexander let make the gates; and so long shall he mine and pierce the earth, till that he shall pass through toward that folk. And when they see the fox they shall have great marvel of him, because that they saw never such a beast. For of all other beasts



Illumination in "Travels of Sir John Mandeville."

[From MS. 24,189 in British Museum.]





they have enclosed amongst them save only the fox. And then they shall chase him and pursue him so strait till that he come to the same place that he came from. And then they shall dig and mine so strongly, till that they find the gates that King Alexander let make of great stones, and paving huge, well cemented and strong for the mastery. And those gates they shall break, and so go out by finding that issue.

This is substantially the adventure in the *Arabian Nights* of Sindbad's deliverance from the charnel-house by following a fox or jackal.

MANDEVILLE'S APOLOGY FOR RELATING NO MORE MARVELS.

There be many other divers countries and many other marvels beyond, that I have not seen. Wherefore of them I cannot speak properly to tell you the manner of them. And also in the countries where I have been be many more diversities of many wonderful things than I make mention of; for it were too long thing to devise you the manner. And therefore that that I have devised you of certain countries, that I have spoken of before, I beseech your worthy and excellent noblesse, that it suffice to you at this time. For if that I devised you all that is beyond the sea, another man, peradventure, that would pain him and travail his body for to go into those marches for to ensearch these countries, might be blamed by my words in rehearsing many strange things; for he might not say nothing of new, in the which the hearer might have either solace or disport, or lust, or liking in the hearing. Wherefore I will hold me still without any more rehearsing of diversities or of marvels that be beyond, to that intent and end that whoso will go into those countries he shall find enough to speak of that I have not touched of in no wise.

Mandeville's conduct in leaving a crop of marvels for his successors to gather after him is indeed most considerate and Christian! In the English version this passage is followed by the statement that he had submitted his narrative to the Pope at Rome, and, more successful than Foote when he sought to beguile Archbishop Secker into revising his farce, obtained his Holiness's authentication of its contents all and sundry. "And so my book (albeit that many men ne list to give credence to nothing but to that that they see with their eye, ne be the author ne the person never so true) is affirmed and proved by our Holy Father in manner and form as I have said." This assertion is not in the original, and proves that the English version could not have been made before 1377, when the Pope returned to Rome from "the Babylonish captivity" at Avignon. No existing manuscript of this transcript is older than the fifteenth century, but it is not certain that those now extant were the earliest.

The above extracts will convey an idea of Mandeville's habitual style, and of the charm of his marvellous tales and quaint reflections, not unmingled with information of real value, generally derived from more serious travellers than himself, respecting the condition of the Oriental world. As Mr. Pollard observes, his pre-eminence among the prose writers of his day arises not so much from actual superiority of talent as from the application of his talent to themes of more human and practical interest than prose had hitherto essayed, and admitting of treatment in a more agreeable style. It may be added that if he had really been an English writer his prose would probably not have been so decidedly in advance of his contemporaries, but that his translators were able to progress by emulating a degree of refinement not

*Merits of  
Mandeville's  
style*

lybeth the blood of the best that he sleeth: and rentyth & haleth the other deale lēme meeles: and deuouryth and swoyeth it.

¶ De Leoperdo. Caplm .lxviij

**L**eopardus is moost cruel best/ & is gendered in spowlebreche of a pride & of a Lynnelle as Alyder sayth. libro. xij. ¶ For as plinius sayth the lyon genoryth wpyth the peridus oher the pride wpyth the lynnelle/ of lu the genorynge comyth unhynde prides as of an houle & of a lye alle/ oher of a maare & a male alle is genderd a mule ¶ As Jyder sayth. the leoperdus is a ful reynge best & breedstonge: and thurlyth blood/ And the female is more cruel than the male as Aristotle sayth/ and hath the dyuers colours as the parde hath: & pursueth his proye sterlynge & leppynge and not rennynge/ And yf he takith not his proye in the thyrde lepe oher in the fourth thenne he styntyth for Indignacyon and gooth bakwarde as though he were ouercome: And is lyke to a lyon in body: taylle & fete: but in shape of the heed he is lyke to the parde/ And he is lesse in body than the lyon/ and therefore he dredyth the lyon: and maketh a caue vnder erthe wpyth double encyngge & oute goynge: and comyth out at a nother / And that caue is ful wyde & large in eyther encyngge and more narough & sighte in the myddyll: And so whan the lyon comyth he sleeth & fallith sodenly in to the caue: and the lyon pursueth wpyth a grette reles and etreth also in þe caue and weneth ther to haue the maystry of the leoperde/ But for grettnesse of hys body he maye not passe freely by þe myddyll of the denne whyche is ful streyght

And whan the leoperde knowyth that þe lyon is so lette and holde in the streyght place: he goth out of the denne forwarde: and comyth aye in to the denne in the oher lyde behynde the lyon: and releseth on hym behynde forth wpyth bytynge & with clawes: And so the leoperde hath ofte in that wyle the maystry of the lyon by craft and not by strengthe / And so the lesse best hath ofte the maystry of the stronge best by dyscepte & gyle in þe denne: and dare not reles on hym openly in the felde as homerus sayth in it. / de pugnis & hastucijs bestiar. ¶ Libro viij. Aristotle spekyth of a best þe hygh te ferulio/ And Auicen callyth that best leoperdus/ ¶ A best sayth Aristotle that hyghte ferulio etyth somtyme venemous thyng and sekerth thenne manys dyrt and eteth it/ And therfore hunters hangyth such dyrt in some vessel on a tree/ And whan þe leoperde cometh to that tree and lepyth vp to take þe dyrt thenne the hunters sleeth hym in the mean tyme whyle he is there abowte/ and the pantera dooth the same & the peridus also as it is sayd there. ¶ Also plinius spekyth of the leoperde & sayth/ that somtyme the leoperde is seke and drynkyth wylde goets blood and scapyth by it the syknesse in that wyle.

¶ De Lepore. Caplm .lxviij.

**T**he hare hyghte Lepus as it were Leupes: lyghtfote/ for it rennyth swyftly / And hyghte Lagos in grewe for swyftnesse in rennynge. And libro. xij. Alyder sayth that the haare is a swyfte best ferfull and fryghet, not/ And hath noo manere hynde of armoure noher of swepes: but onoly lyghtnesse of mebres & of lēmes: & is feble of lyfte

cc ij

yet attained by their own language. The translators of the Bible, of Plutarch, of Camden's *History of Elizabeth*, of many other books that might be named, were to find themselves similarly braced and stimulated. A great translation may sometimes effect more for the language than a great original work.

Another translator of a celebrated book of English origin has not left us in ignorance of his name. We are indebted to JOHN DE TREVISA (1326-1412) for a translation of Higden's *Polychronicon*, printed in the fifteenth century by Caxton, and reprinted along with the original in the "Rolls Series." Trevisa also made a version of Bartholomew de Glanville's *De Proprietatibus Rerum*, of which the first printed edition was one of the earliest and finest books from the press of Caxton's successor, Wynkyn de Worde. He is credited also with several other translations which have remained in manuscript. All his work was performed for Thomas, Baron Berkeley, whose chaplain he was. The only original prose treatise of the age deserving of any notice is *The Testament of Love*, by THOMAS USK, and this not on account of its own merits, but from the singular fortunes of the author, and the circumstance of its having been ascribed to Chaucer. He had turned in 1384 evidence against John de Northampton, the seditious Mayor of London, whose instrument he had been, and composed this treatise to justify himself. He thus regained the favour of King Richard, only to incur the animosity of the party headed by the Duke of Gloucester, who compassed his execution in 1388. The book was composed somewhere between these dates. It is in form an imitation of the *Consolation* of Boethius, translated by Chaucer, and, the writer's name being for centuries disguised under an unsuspected anagram, it was attributed to Chaucer himself by his early uncritical editors (mainly because in Gower's *Confessio Amantis* Venus bids Chaucer make his Testament of Love in quite a different sense), and has actually been used as an authority for his life. It was not until our days that Professors Skeat and Bradley between them discovered and deciphered the anagram, and proved the author to be Usk. The book has been thought to evince symptoms of a desire to gain Chaucer's intercession; if so, it must have been written before December 1386, when Chaucer himself fell into disgrace. A more interesting book is "The Sixteen Revelations of Divine Love," and mystical meditations of the hermitess Juliana of Norwich, composed early in the fifteenth century. They are full of tender feeling, and have been four times printed.

*Minor prose  
writers*

## CHAPTER VII

### THE ENGLISH BIBLE—THE MIRACLE PLAY

*The Bible  
and English  
Literature*

THERE is no literature, at least no important literature, so largely indebted as the English to a collection of writings in a foreign language, produced under circumstances exceedingly dissimilar to any that ever existed in England, and which may for practical purposes be regarded as a single book. These writings arose in nations which not merely appear to have little in common with either the Teutonic or the Celtic forefathers of the modern British, but which actually belonged to a different race of mankind. Large as is the infusion of the Hellenic mind into the later books of the BIBLE, every individual author is not merely an Oriental, but one absolutely estranged in blood from all the families which have combined to form the British race. Yet, were it possible to eliminate from British literature whatever it owes to the Bible, the residuum would be like "the shorn and parcelled Oxus" in comparison with

The majestic stream that flowed  
Right for the polar star, past Orgunje,  
Brimming and bright and large.

Yet, on the other hand, if the literature of Britain is to some extent a derivative literature, there is no such other example of a literature having assimilated a foreign element so completely to itself. Latin literature owes everything to Greece, but Greek literature was by no means so thoroughly appropriated by it as the Scriptures have been appropriated by the English-speaking peoples. Reversing what has just been said, it may be asserted with equal truth that, could the Bible be erased from the consciousness of those peoples, it would forfeit well-nigh half of its influence over the world. If it is still a mighty power, it owes this, humanly speaking, to the reverence, and hardly less to the free handling, of England and the nations most closely allied to her in blood. The obligation thus conferred has been repaid by an elevation, a picturesqueness, and an affluence of beautiful sentiment which confers on the literatures of these peoples a great advantage over those which, whether from national incompatibility, or the impediments created by sinister interests, have been more or less debarred from this treasury of grandeur. All modern nations, indeed, have borrowed more or less from the Scriptures, and been more or less influenced by them as literature; but the Northern nations

alone, and more particularly the British, have so thoroughly assimilated them that they seem to have naturalised patriarchs and prophets as their own countrymen.

This complete naturalisation of the Scriptures in Britain is, of course, mainly to be accounted for by religious considerations, and may be paralleled in some measure by the corresponding phenomena of the influence of the Buddhist sacred writings, works of Indian origin, in China, Tartary, and Japan; and of the Arabic Koran in Turkey and Persia. It is, indeed, an astonishing circumstance that the Turanian Turks and the Aryan Persians should have consented to receive not only their religion, but their law from the Semites; yet there is every reason to believe that the national thought and life in those countries have been far less permeated by the foreign element than the national life and thought of Protestant Europe have been by the Bible. For this there is an obvious reason: the Bible, in admirable vernacular renderings, has passed into European literature, while the Koran, for all practical purposes, may be said to have never been translated at all. It is even asserted that the Koran cannot be translated, that its beauties are incapable of transfusion into any foreign idiom. How differently the case stands with Britain and the Bible is known to every person competent to read English, and this very familiarity blinds us to the extraordinary and unique position of our literature in claiming as one of its two supreme glories translations of books which were ancient before it had itself so much as an existence. It would have been nearly a parallel case if Virgil, instead of composing an original epic, had translated Homer; if his version had become as thoroughly national a poem as his *Æneid* has; and if Cicero could have occupied the place in the literature of Rome which Shakespeare fills in the literature of England.

*Vast influence  
of the Scrip-  
tures on  
England*

The history of the English Bible from Caedmon to the Authorised Version of 1611 is full of literary and personal interest. It is divided into two clearly distinguished periods by the Reformation. Before this great epoch translations were made from the Latin Vulgate, which in the general ignorance of Greek and Hebrew was invested with the respect due to the original. After the Reformation, versions were made from the languages of the writers. No longer proscribed, but encouraged by authority; no longer confined to manuscript, but disseminated by the printing-press; the Bible took a position and exerted an influence which had until then been unattainable. There is, notwithstanding, sufficient evidence that throughout the Middle Ages the national life had been largely leavened by the knowledge of the Scriptures which indirectly reached the people through liturgical services, ecclesiastical legends, dramatic performances, and the vernacular homilies of priests and friars. Not, however, until the time of Wycliffe do they become ostensibly an important factor in the mind of England, or assume a position in great English literature. The literary history of the English Bible practically begins with him; before, however, entering upon his relation to it, which is itself only a section of a wider sphere of activity, it will be desirable to trace

*History of the  
English Bible*

with brevity, as far as possible, the Bible's subterranean course through the mediæval age.

*The English  
Bible in the  
Middle Ages*

The almost exclusively religious character of Anglo-Saxon literature after the conversion of the people to Christianity has already been remarked. Several poetical compositions of considerable beauty upon secular themes remain, but the works of the chief literary representatives of the age, Caedmon, Cynewulf, and their disciples, are entirely Biblical or ecclesiastical. The poems attributed to Caedmon are mainly paraphrases of Scripture, and it is no more than justice to style them the first English Bibles. More precise



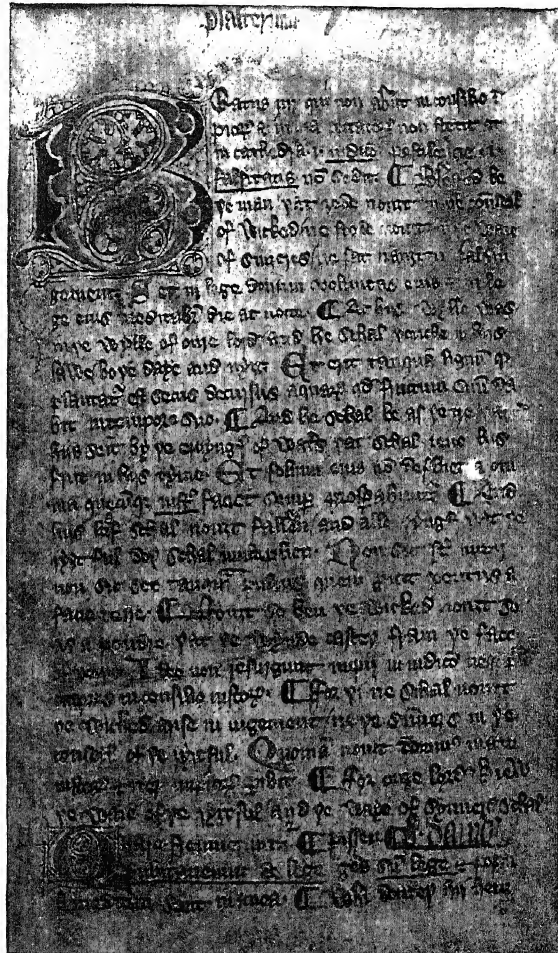
Portrait of Wycliffe

*From Bale's "Illustrium Scriptorum Majoris  
Britanniae," 1548*

and literal versions followed. Beda died while translating the Gospel of John, and translations of other portions are attributed by tradition to Eadfrith, Bishop of Lindisfarne, and to Alcuin in the eighth century, and to Alfred in the ninth. These, if they ever existed, have perished; but the translated Psalter of Aldhelm, Abbot of Malmesbury and Bishop of Sherborne, at the beginning of the eighth century, survives in a single copy, edited by Thorpe in 1835. It is partly in prose and partly in verse. Next come some highly interesting examples of vernacular Scripture in the interlinear translations of the Vulgate text which are found in ancient manuscripts of the Gospels. The most important are the Lindisfarne Gospels and the Rushworth Gospels, priceless MSS. each provided with an interlinear Saxon rendering, most probably added early in the tenth century. These labours of solitary monks cannot be appealed to as proofs of a desire for Biblical knowledge among the people at large, but show at least that there were those who desired that the Scriptures should be accessible to those unacquainted with Latin. Such was the aim of Aelfric, the most celebrated Saxon ecclesiastic of his day, of whose extensive versions from the Bible we have already spoken. These would probably have yielded abundant fruit if Alfred had been upon the throne, but in the stagnant period immediately preceding the Conquest there was not enough mental oxygen to support combustion. The Conquest occasioned a great solution of continuity. The Normans do not appear to have at that time taken any interest in the Scriptures, and when at length the more thoughtful and devout portion of the community recovered in some measure from the blow that had laid it prostrate, the language of the old versions had become obsolete, and the foreign hierarchy discouraged the preparation of new ones. Cranmer and More nevertheless declare that such versions existed, and Foxe attributes their disappearance to the havoc wrought at the dis-

solution of the monasteries. These statements appear groundless : at all events, though there is sufficient evidence of a fair acquaintance with the leading events and personages of Scripture history among all classes, two Psalters by William de Shoreham and Richard Rolle are the only noticeable vestiges of vernacular Biblical translation between the age of Aelfric and the age of Wycliffe. Even these belong to the first half of the fourteenth century, a period when the influences pregnant with a Wycliffe were already manifesting themselves.

Bishop Stubbs, as we have seen, remarks a considerable deterioration in the ideals of the fourteenth century as compared with those of the preceding age. It would perhaps be more correct to say that new ideals were taking the place of the old. The mediæval conception of life had in the thirteenth century attained its highest development. Innocent the Third, Thomas Aquinas, St. Francis, St. Dominic, had in their respective ways developed it to the greatest possible extent, and Dante had enshrined it in a monument which, like other sacred fanes, might serve equally for shrine or sepulchre. Had



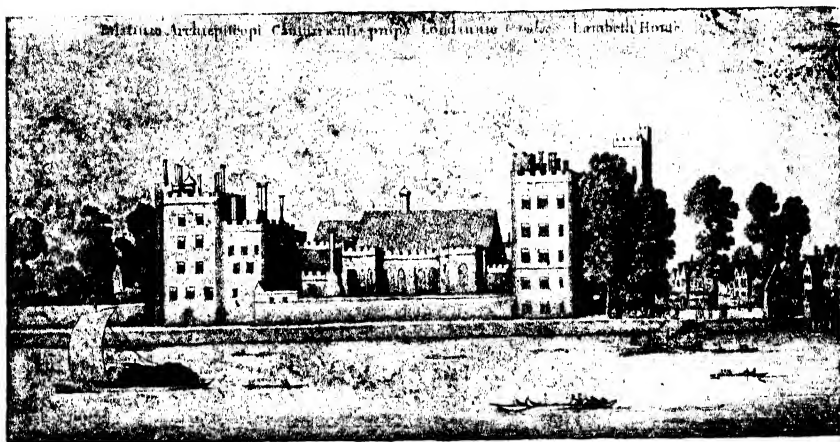
From William of Shoreham's Psalter

British Museum, Add. MSS. 17376

Europe been China, the system thus wrought out might have been stereotyped for ages : but every thinking European admitted the possibility of improvement in the departments of secular information ; and although to most contemporaries of Dante belief and knowledge appeared perfectly compatible, it was soon discovered that the extension of the one involved the modification of the other. The full exposition of this simple but momentous circumstance would lead us too far from our actual theme of the English Bible, but in one

*Influences  
promoting  
a vernacular  
version of the  
Scriptures*

of its phases it is too intimately connected with this to be passed over. The mediæval system of thought was not, like the ancient theology of Egypt, professedly complete in and sufficient to itself. It was admittedly based upon an earlier dispensation, with which it was bound to harmonise; the study of the documents of this earlier age, therefore, could not be omitted by the student of the later; and the resulting discovery that in fact they were not in harmony, but that the Church had diverged from the Scriptures in many particulars, could not but lead those who sought to correct such aberrations to bring their case to the knowledge of their fellows by placing the primitive documents before them, which could only be effected through the medium of vernacular translations. Hence the coincidence of that general dissatisfaction



View of Lambeth Palace from the River

*Engraved by Hollar, 1647*

with ecclesiastical corruptions of which Chaucer and Gower afford such decisive evidence with that movement towards the production of an English Bible which became personified in JOHN WYCLIFFE.

*John Wycliffe*

Wycliffe was a Yorkshireman, born, some time between 1320 and 1330, at Hipswell a village about a mile from the picturesque town of Richmond in the North Riding. Of his parentage we know nothing, but he may probably have been connected with the Wycliffes of Wycliffe, on the Yorkshire side of the Tees opposite Barnard Castle, a family of station, who had been lords of the manor ever since the Conquest. Of his early life nothing is known with certainty; but if, as is most probable, he is to be identified with the John de Wycliffe who was Master of Balliol College in 1361, he must have led the life of an Oxford scholar in divinity. It then took sixteen years for the candidate to arrive at the degree of D.D., and we are justified in picturing Wycliffe as an assiduous student, with thoughts for the time bounded by the knowledge he was seeking to acquire. Nor would such a training be unsuitable for the future reformer. It is noticeable—and the remark is true of all religious societies without exception, great or small, Catholic or Protestant—that the Church and the University take opposite sides. The Church labours to keep things as they are, the University to innovate. Church rulers, from the Pope to the Synod, are always more or less in conflict with the

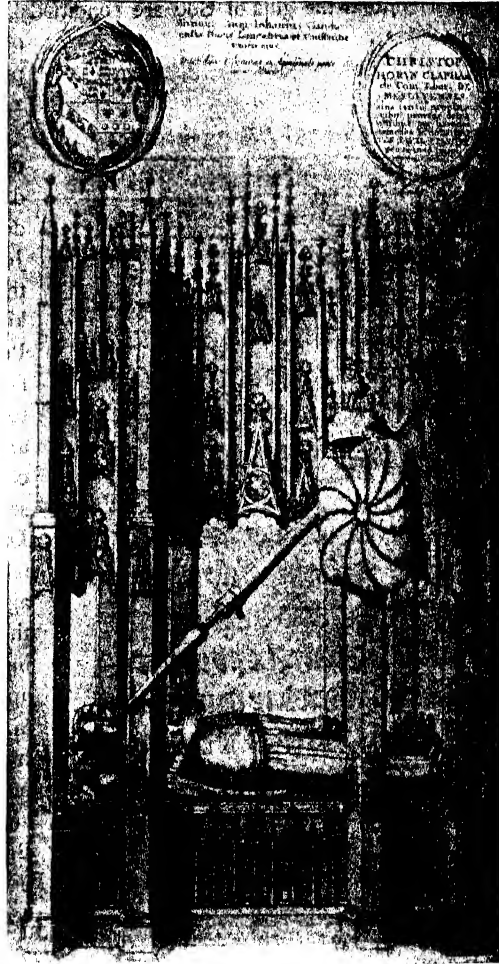


University professor. We have not here to produce the numerous causes which might be alleged in explanation of this phenomenon, but merely to point out that Wycliffe might never have been heard of if he had been in his youth a parish priest.

The Mastership of Balliol was not then the great post that it is now, and there seems no doubt that Wycliffe resigned it in 1361 for the rectory of Fillingham in the diocese

*Wycliffe as  
parish priest*

of Lincoln, to which he was presented by the College. The identity of the master and the rector with the reformer seems certain, but other notices about this time probably refer to other persons of the same name. Only one is of importance. It has been disputed whether the reformer is to be identified with the John de Wycliffe who, in 1365, was appointed by Archbishop Islip to the headship of Canterbury Hall, a theological college founded by the Archbishop, and who unsuccessfully appealed to Rome against his removal by Islip's successor Langham. It is incontestable that the identity of the two Wycliffes was asserted in the reformer's lifetime by his adversaries, who imputed his hostility to the monks to his having been displaced in their favour. When, however, it is considered that another John Wycliffe was in 1361 presented by Archbishop Islip to the rectory of Mayfield, the place of the Primate's own country residence, and that the Archbishop endeavoured to annex this rectory to the



John of Gaunt's Tomb in Old St. Paul's Cathedral

wardenship of the hall he had founded, it can scarcely be doubted that the warden and the rector were the same person, and consequently that the warden is not to be identified with the reformer. This is the more probable since Wycliffe appears not to have taken the degree of doctor in divinity until 1372. He must by this time have acquired considerable reputation, for in 1374 his name is second in a commission dispatched to Bruges to settle disputes with the Pope respecting the intrusion of foreigners into English benefices, and similar abuses. If, as the St. Albans chronicler asserts, Wycliffe had in 1377 "for some years" been "barking against the Church," he

probably represented the reforming party, which expressed the views of the Parliament but not of the Court. The mission produced little effect. It is difficult to date Wycliffe's first known literary production, a tract against the tribute claimed by the Pope from England, in which he cites a Parliamentary debate which may have occurred either in 1366 or 1374. The most important of his numerous Latin works, *De Domin. Divino* and *De Domino Civili*, in which he works out a thesis of Fitzralph, Archbishop of Armagh, that the gifts of God are conditional, and that deadly sin deprives a man

of all right to possess anything, were probably written between 1372 and 1377.

We are very imperfectly informed of the details of Wycliffe's activity during this period, but he had evidently become closely identified with John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, the most important person in the kingdom since the death of the Black Prince and the decline of Edward III.'s faculties, and who was bitterly opposed to the extortions of the Roman Court and the pretensions of the English clergy. Wycliffe must have made himself conspicuous as a supporter of the Duke, or the bishops would not have taken the strong step of proceeding against him for the heresies which they professed to have discovered in his writings. In February 1377 he appeared before the assembled prelates in St. Paul's Cathedral, escorted by the Duke of Lancaster and numerous supporters. A violent scene ensued between the Duke and the Bishop of London, the assembly broke up in confusion, and no further proceedings took place until the following December, when a Papal bull arrived enjoining that Wycliffe should be

### Apocalypse

Wycliffe and  
John of Gaunt

þæt æn of þe elðre mē leuð to mē. iberp  
þou not lo alou of þe lymage of man.  
þe toun of dounp: hap oīloun to ope  
ne þe book: þæt to bruden þe seuē seculis  
of it: / Bi þe ristals of þe lord: is bi  
tokened gooddis sone/ bi þe toun jar  
le lūp: vpp: is bitokened þe fleisch  
pat þe tok of þe /ggō marie. þre þe  
goolhed refay/ bi þe book is broke  
ned þe saued. to biēn mā aze/ þe wri  
tyng is þe bitokenep þe olde la  
ise jar techip derkly is þe figuris bi  
þe isyng is þe out. brokenep þe ne  
ise laise jar techip appuly/ þe seuē  
seculis bē bitokened þe seuene sāmē  
tis of hooch chūrd. qz þe seuene zif  
tis of þe lūli goot/ bi þe stouge an  
gel is bitokened þe olde laise qz þe

Extract from Commentary (ascribed to  
Wycliffe) on the Apocalypse

British Museum, Harleian MS 3913

delivered into the custody of the Archbishop of Canterbury. But in the interim Wycliffe had been growing in influence and popularity; he had been consulted by Parliament on the lawfulness of stopping the exportation of money to Rome; the citizens of London, though antagonistic to his patron Lancaster, generally took his part; the University of Oxford, though censuring him for incautiousness, refused to condemn him as a heretic; when at length, February 1378, he appeared before the bishops at Lambeth, the young king's mother interfered in his favour, and a tumult among the citizens interrupted the proceedings. Wycliffe was directed by the bishops to desist from preaching, but paid no attention to the injunction. Like Luther at a later period, he had partly drifted, partly been driven, into a position of hostility to the Church which

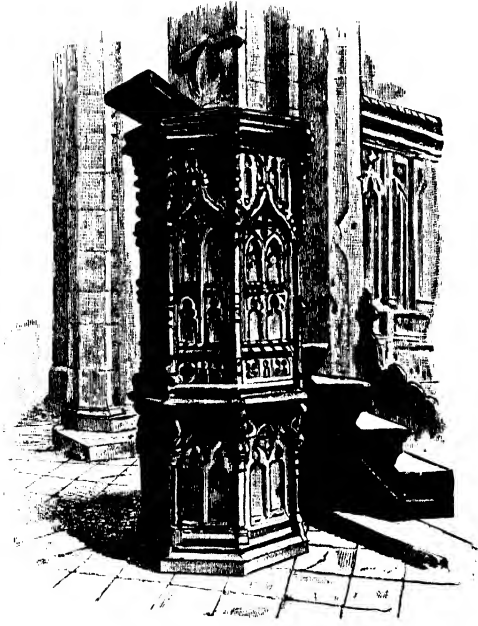
he had no intention of assuming when he began his career as a reformer. In the year of his trial, 1378, an event occurred which could not but exert the greatest influence on his attitude towards Rome, the Great Schism, when the Papacy was claimed by two rival Popes, each with a plausible, neither with an unimpeachable title, each anathematising the other, and each receiving the allegiance of a moiety of Christendom. From this time commence those phases of Wycliffe's activity which have rendered his name immortal. Hitherto he had been an academical and clerical tribune of the people; henceforth it is his one purpose to bring the Gospel to the knowledge of the poor.

The machinery employed by Wycliffe to this end was twofold—the organisation of a company of preachers something in the manner afterwards adopted by Wesley, and the translation of the Scriptures into the vulgar tongue. It is the latter alone with which we are concerned as literary historians; but it will be expedient briefly to trace the remainder of Wycliffe's life before describing the achievement which has given him his great place in the history of the English language and English literature.

According to the statement of a hostile chronicler, Wycliffe “gathered around him many disciples in his pravity living in Oxford, clad in long russet gowns of one pattern, going on foot, ventilating his errors among the people and publicly preaching them in sermons.” These were at first obliged to be priests, but afterwards laymen were admitted.

With this missionary organisation, with the support of princely personages like John of Gaunt, and with the sympathy of the University, Wycliffe might perhaps have anticipated the English Reformation by a century and a half but for the too rapid development of his own views and their identification in the popular mind with innovations in secular matters. That his reasonings on religious matters should have conducted him to the denial of the doctrine of Transubstantiation is nothing wonderful, but he was taking up a position to which the average mind of that day could not follow him, and justifying the accusation of heresy, hitherto regarded as frivolous. Here conscience left him no alternative, but he cannot be acquitted of indiscretion in pushing to injudicious and, indeed, fanatical extremes his views on the compulsory poverty of the clergy, and his animosity against the monastic orders, which ultimately came to comprehend the mendicant friars, of whom he had been wont to speak favourably. By thus stirring up questions which might well have slumbered, he not only estranged powerful supporters, but imparted a colour of fanaticism to his doctrine which rendered it easy to make him responsible for the excesses committed in the peasants' revolt of 1381, whose leaders, indeed, probably were Wycliffites, but much else also. Society was thoroughly alarmed.

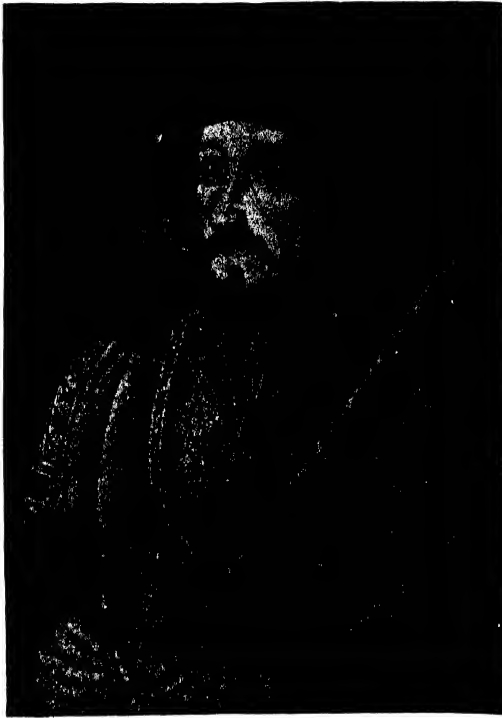
*Wycliffe's  
organisation  
of his followers*



Wycliffe's Pulpit in Lutterworth Church

and the tide turned against Wycliffe. Archbishop Courtenay, his old antagonist as Bishop of London, succeeded in 1382 in extorting a reluctant condemnation from the University, and Wycliffe retired to his Leicestershire rectory of Lutterworth. It speaks for the extraordinary influence he had attained, and the protection he received in high quarters, that his triumphant and exasperated enemies never ventured to molest him there. The condemned heretic remained in peaceful possession of his living, and went on preaching, teaching, issuing polemical treatises, and engaged, above all things, in the

work which has chiefly made him illustrious, the translation of the Bible into English. On the last day of 1384 he died from the effects of a paralytic stroke which had befallen him three days previously. In 1428 his remains were disinterred and flung into the river in obedience to a decree of the Council of Constance, which had remained unexecuted for thirteen years, and probably would never have been issued but for the influence his opinions were exerting in Bohemia. It was there, indeed, that after the violent suppression of Wycliffism and Lollardy under Henry IV., the most visible traces of his opinions were to be found. Huss owed everything to him, and was the channel through which Wycliffe's opinions reached the German Reformers; the scholastic form



Henry IV.

*After the portrait in the National Portrait Gallery*

in which they had been expressed, however, prevented their exerting any great influence under the changed conditions of those times. His pulpit remains in his church at Lutterworth; and a splendid literary monument has been erected to him in the nineteenth century by Forshall and Madden's grand edition of his Bible (Oxford, 1850), followed by the labours of Lechler, Shirley, Poole, Matthew, and other scholars; and of two societies which have published the writings attributed to him, some of them of doubtful authenticity.

*Wycliffe and  
his disciples*

Like Homer among the rhapsodists, Raphael at the Vatican, and many another leading figure in history, Wycliffe appears as the centre of a band of colleagues and disciples, participators in his work, and whose shares it is not always easy to discriminate from his own. There must long have been a wish among the more pious and enlightened members of the clergy and monastic orders to give the people the Scriptures in their native tongue. The accom-

plishment of this desire would naturally be impeded by the low state of education among the people in general, and by the politic apprehensions of the rulers of the Church, who could not but be well aware that the reading of the Bible without note or comment, or even with these, must be productive of heresy. Two distinct currents among those favourable to the dissemination of the Scriptures may accordingly be traced—the purely devotional, most powerful among monks and ascetics, and the doctrinal, represented by the Lollards, who, though not known in England under that name until Wycliffe's times, had existed from the beginning of the fourteenth century as protesters against the worldliness of the Church. That the devotional element had at first the upper hand is shown by the fact that the first translations from Scripture were Psalters; while the affinity between this tendency and the reforming movement is evinced by the popularity of the translator of the Psalter, Richard Rolle, among the Lollards, which probably deprived him of the honour of canonisation. Rolle, a hermit, was likely to be chiefly interested in the more spiritual portions of Scripture; the movement for the translation of Scripture as a whole would naturally spring up in the homes of learning, where men's knowledge and sympathies were wider, and was fitly impersonated in so eminent an Oxford scholar as John Wycliffe.

Wycliffe had begun early to comment upon Scripture if what has been alleged, though on no very convincing testimony, to have been his first work, a commentary on the Revelation, was, as usually thought, produced as early as 1352. It seems to have been in the form of lectures, notes from which were afterwards expanded into a treatise by his disciple Purvey. It can only be conjectured whether his attention to apocalyptic Scripture was actuated by the Black Death and the other recent calamities of his times. Eight years later, according to the date sometimes given, he is thought to be found engaged in the more momentous undertaking of a translation of the Gospels, accompanied by a commentary, not in the main his own, but chiefly rendered from the Fathers. If, however, the work really dated from this period, it can hardly have obtained much notice, as Wycliffe's adversaries make no reference to it until the latter years of his life. There is little doubt, nevertheless, that Wycliffe did translate the Gospels, and the version of the rest of the New Testament may also have proceeded from him. In the rest of his work he was, like Moses, upborne by two helpers, one a fellow-interpreter, the other a general reviser and corrector. Both were Oxford scholars.

NICHOLAS OF HEREFORD, a man to be remembered with honour, notwithstanding his subsequent backsliding, as the first English translator of the Old Testament after Anglo-Saxon times, was a Fellow of Queen's College, Oxford, where Wycliffe had had rooms, and appears in 1382 as a frequent occupant of the pulpit of St. Mary's, from which so many different views have been propounded, in support of Wycliffe's doctrines. Under pressure from the Archbishop he was in the summer of that year prohibited from preaching, was

*Wycliffe's  
version of the  
Scriptures*

*Nicholas of  
Hereford*

excommunicated shortly afterwards, and immediately betook himself to Rome to protest against his condemnation. As he was detained in Italy until 1385, the year after Wycliffe's death, his translation of the Old Testament must have been executed by 1382. It finishes abruptly in the middle of the book of Baruch, as though it had been interrupted, and the remainder of the Apocrypha may have been translated by Wycliffe himself. Hereford was again condemned at Rome and sentenced to perpetual imprisonment. The troubles of Italy aided him to escape. In 1386 he was again in England, and seems to have been at large until about 1388, when he fell into the hands of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and was harassed until he consented to recant. His recantation must have been regarded as sincere, for he afterwards held preferment as chancellor and treasurer of Hereford, and is accused of having joined in the persecution of his old associates. In his latter years he became a Carthusian monk. In judging what seems his weakness or treachery, it must not be forgotten that some of Wycliffe's followers mingled religious reformation with views that struck at the foundations of society and estranged many who wished them well.

*John Purvey*

No such excuse need be pleaded for JOHN PURVEY, who, if for a while he bowed to the storm, proved a very Abdiel in comparison. He appears to have been born in Buckinghamshire, and to have been educated at Oxford. He was Wycliffe's curate at Lutterworth, and whether of his own accord or by his superior's injunction undertook a thorough revision of the Bible of Wycliffe and Hereford, with the special view of amending Hereford's cramped and over-Latinised style. Leaving Lutterworth after Wycliffe's death, he appears to have finished his work at Bristol about 1388. In 1390 he was imprisoned, but still found means to write. If his imprisonment lasted till 1401, the date of the atrocious statute *De heretico comburendo*, it can hardly be wondered that his spirit should have been bowed to recantation in that year, when he was relieved from spiritual censures and inducted into a Kentish vicarage, which his conscience would not suffer him to retain. In 1421 he was again imprisoned, and he appears as a petitioner to Cardinal Beaufort so late as 1427.

Purvey has left us an account of his manner of proceeding, undoubtedly as accurate as it is quaint and touching :

A simple creature hath translated the Bible out of Latin into English. First, this simple creature had much travail, with divers fellows and helpers, to gather many old Bibles and other doctors and common glosses, and to make one Latin Bible some deal<sup>1</sup> true ; and then to study it anew, the text with the gloss and other doctors as he might get, and specially Nicolaus de Lyra on the Old Testament that helped full much in this work ; the third time to counsel with old grammarians and old divines of hard words and hard sentences, how they might be best understood and translated ; the fourth time to translate as he could to the sentence, and to have many good fellows and cunning at the correcting of the translation.

It would thus appear that Purvey's work upon the translation of Wycliffe and Hereford, more particularly the latter's portion, went beyond the mere correction of the style ; that copies of the Vulgate were collated to ascertain

<sup>1</sup> Part ; German, *theil*.

multitude that be tied in y<sup>e</sup> leste foie  
of kinde. for ye y<sup>e</sup>shal sette for y<sup>e</sup>wor<sup>th</sup> y<sup>e</sup>  
mee that not here ye puple. ye puple is  
forloste w<sup>th</sup> an hard nol. that be tied  
to his hie f<sup>r</sup>ye lord of his caritate. i. pey  
shul wote for y<sup>e</sup>an ye lord god of he. and  
y<sup>e</sup>shal p<sup>r</sup>ue to ye an hie. i. yei shul vnder  
foude. i. eres. i. yei shul here. i. yei shul  
p<sup>r</sup>ile me i. ye lord of y<sup>e</sup> caritate. i. mydeful  
yei shul be of my name. i. yei shul enen  
mye y<sup>e</sup>lele f<sup>r</sup> y<sup>e</sup> hard rig. i. f<sup>r</sup> y<sup>e</sup> clidhed.  
for yei shul remembre ye weie of y<sup>e</sup> sadus  
yat syneden i me. i. y<sup>e</sup>shal azei clepe he  
i. to ye lord yat y<sup>e</sup> lison to ye fads of he  
a brulhu. i. laic. i. jacob. i. yei shul lord  
synen of m. i. y<sup>e</sup>shal multyphe ye. i. yei  
shul not be lashed. i. y<sup>e</sup>shal sette to yem  
an oy testamnet. eue durrende y<sup>e</sup> p<sup>r</sup> be to  
ye. i. to a lord. i. yei shul be to me i. to a  
puple. i. y<sup>e</sup>shal no more moue my puple  
ye. i. to a lord. i. yei shul be to me i. to a  
puple. i. y<sup>e</sup>shal no more moue my puple  
ye. i. to a lord. i. yei shul be to me i. to a  
puple. i. y<sup>e</sup>shal no more moue my puple

reho found his place. who cride i to his  
trefor. i. wher be ye pners of ierusalem  
i. yat lord synen of beites yat be up or  
erpe. yat i. ye bridders of heuene plegen  
yat hie trebren. i. gold. i. whidye cteu  
me. i. p<sup>r</sup>is noon ende of ye purthasing  
of he. yat hie f<sup>r</sup>gei. i. deu bely. no y  
is fuding of ye work of he. yei be our  
lauud. i. to helle yei weie dou. i. oppr  
me i. ye place of he risen. yei go  
Ephie translation Richoldy de herford



**D**id now lord god of n<sup>r</sup>. ye coule i  
auguyllhes. i. ye shur to tordend. crye  
to yee. here lord. i. haue myc for god y<sup>e</sup>  
art nactul. i. haue myc of vs for wee  
han syned b<sup>r</sup>at yee yat stait i to euer  
mor. i. wee shul not p<sup>r</sup>se i to ye synatut  
dunig. lord god al myti god of n<sup>r</sup>. he  
ye now ye orison of ye dede me of n<sup>r</sup>.  
i. of ye cou<sup>th</sup> of h<sup>r</sup> for yei han syned  
for yee. i. yei been not ye d<sup>r</sup>is of ye lord  
f<sup>r</sup> god. i. ioyued be to vs c<sup>r</sup>elus. wote y<sup>e</sup>  
not han myde of ye wickenede of oure  
fads. but haue myde of y<sup>e</sup>u hound. i. of y<sup>e</sup>  
name y<sup>e</sup>ps. i. y<sup>e</sup>ue. for y<sup>e</sup> art lord oure god.  
i. wee shul p<sup>r</sup>ile ye lord. for for y<sup>e</sup> y<sup>e</sup> ha  
zoue y<sup>e</sup> dyed. i. p<sup>r</sup>ointe lites y<sup>e</sup> mee. i. uard  
li clepe y<sup>e</sup> name. i. p<sup>r</sup>ile ye. i. oure caritate.  
for wee shul be tied f<sup>r</sup> ye wickenede  
of oure fads yat syneden i yee. i. to wee  
i oure caritate beu to dai y<sup>e</sup> vs y<sup>e</sup> ha  
tidd. i. to w<sup>r</sup>ff. i. i. to cur. i. i. to l<sup>r</sup>me. att  
alle ye wickidnesse of oure fads yat  
weientu. azei f<sup>r</sup> ye lord oure god. here  
y<sup>e</sup> i. ye magidnes of h<sup>r</sup>. i. w<sup>r</sup>eres par  
ceyue y<sup>e</sup> y<sup>e</sup> wote p<sup>r</sup>ence. wote is w<sup>r</sup> y<sup>e</sup>  
ye lord of ye ouermy<sup>th</sup> y<sup>e</sup> art. yei ha  
eidid i an alien lond y<sup>e</sup> art desbuld w<sup>r</sup>  
wote me. y<sup>e</sup> art set w<sup>r</sup> me goende cou  
i to helle. y<sup>e</sup> ha  
foulake ye wene of  
wildni. for it i. ye w<sup>r</sup>ies of god y<sup>e</sup> ha  
go. y<sup>e</sup> shuldut han dwelid f<sup>r</sup> l<sup>r</sup>ye. i. pes  
up on erpe. i. erue wher be p<sup>r</sup>ence. wher  
be v<sup>r</sup>ue. wher be v<sup>r</sup>id. i. y<sup>e</sup> w<sup>r</sup>ie  
te to y<sup>e</sup> wher be long abiding of f<sup>r</sup>  
i. of l<sup>r</sup>ide. wher be l<sup>r</sup>it of eren. i. pes

ca. 3<sup>m</sup>

the preferable readings, and commentators of reputation, such as Nicolaus de Lyra, consulted in hopes of their annotations throwing light upon difficult passages ; and that so many coadjutors were invoked that Purvey must be regarded as the principal of a small college or scriptorium. As his revision appears to have occupied more time than the actual translation work of Wycliffe and Hereford, it may be inferred that they had been less zealous for absolute accuracy. A translator of the Vulgate, well acquainted with Latin, would be able to proceed with great expedition so long as he did not concern himself with niceties, but, like the monk in *The Misfortunes of Elphin*, "took a single and simple draught of whatever was before him." If he undertook to balance the readings of the various MSS. his course would be much retarded. It is not said whether any use was made of the French version which then existed, and which is mentioned in Purvey's Prologue ; and the absence of reference to any more ancient English translations than Wycliffe's throws great doubt upon the assertion of their existence by Cranmer, More, and Foxe.

*Character of  
the Wycliffe  
version*

It would, of course, have been impossible for Wycliffe's version, even as amended by Purvey, to have established itself as the national translation, if for this reason only, that it was made from the Vulgate. No translation of a translation can take classic rank, and, could the general circulation of Wycliffe's version have been assured, could it even have expelled the Vulgate from the Liturgy, the completeness of its success, by stimulating the desire for acquaintance with the original language of the sacred writings, must soon have deprived it of special authority. It is, nevertheless, a memorable event in the history of English literature, greatly enriching the language and aiding to give it consistency ; although its limited circulation, the rudimentary character of its prose, and its derivation from an incorrect Latin version, forbade it to bestow that assured stability upon our speech which this owes to the Authorised Version and its immediate predecessors. When, however, it is considered that upwards of 150 copies of Purvey's recension are known to exist, notwithstanding the hostility of the clergy in the fifteenth century and the wholesale devastation of libraries in the sixteenth, it is clear that its influence cannot have been inconsiderable ; while it is no less significant that none of these copies appear to be later than 1430.

*Purvey's  
revision*

The translation to which Purvey's Prologue is prefixed is manifestly the later of the two, for he says, speaking of the errors of the Latin Vulgate : "The common Latin Bibles have more need to be corrected, as many as I have seen in my life, than hath the English Bible late translated." This late translation can be no other than Wycliffe and Hereford's. The object of his revision was not merely to amend the errors of the preceding version, which he commends by implication as being after all more correct than most copies of the Vulgate, but to eliminate obsolete expressions and soften asperities of style. It has been remarked that he allows himself more freedom as he proceeds, and that the latter part is nearer to modern diction than the earlier. It is, nevertheless, no more than a revision of the Wycliffe-Hereford translation, and the differences





between the two have been greatly exaggerated. The following passage will afford the means of comparison :

#### HEREFORD.

And the Lord seide to Abram, after that Loth was divyded from him, Heave up thine eyes ever ryght, and se for the place in the which thou art now to the north and south, to the est and west ; al the lande that thou beholdest I shall give to thee and to thi seede, for to evermore. And I shall make thi seede as poudir of the erthe, if the men myght en noumbre the poudir of the erthe, and thi seede too shall men noumbre. Aryse thanne and overgo the lond in lengthe and in brede, for I am to gyve it to thee. Abram thanne, mouyng his tabernacle, cam and dwellide biside the valey of Mambre, the which is in Ebron, and bildide there an auter to the Lord.

#### PURVEY.

And the Lord seide to Abram, after that Loth was departed from him : Reise thine eyen forth right, and se from the place in which thou art now, to the north and south, to the east and west ; Y schal gyve al the lond which thou seest to thee and to thi seid, til in to with outen ende. And Y schal make thi seid as the dust of erthe ; if any man may noumbre the dust of erthe, also he schal now noumbre thi seid. Therfor rise thee, and passe thore the lond in his length and breede, for Y schal gyve it to thee. Therfor Abram, mouyng his tabernacle, cam and dwellide bisidis the valler of Mambre, which is in Ebron, and he bildede there an auter to the Lord.

A comparison with the Authorised Version will be found instructive as showing how little the language has changed, and to how great an extent Wycliffe's is the basis of our modern English Bible.

And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward. For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth : so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and the breadth of it ; for I will give it unto thee. Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the Lord.

*Wycliffe's  
influence on  
the Authorised  
Version*

Cranmer's secretary, Ralph Morice, tells us that when the new version of the Bible was undertaken in the reign of Henry VIII., "an old English translation" of the New Testament, unquestionably Wycliffe's, was copied and sent in portions to the bishops and other divines engaged, with directions "to send back their parts corrected." Cranmer's New Testament, then, was not regarded as an entirely new translation, and the similarity of the versions of the Old Testament throughout proves that they were treated in the same manner. When the Authorised Version was undertaken under James I., the first injunction to the translators was "The ordinary Bible read in the church, commonly called the Bishops' Bible, to be followed, and as little altered as the truth of the original will permit." It is hence sufficiently clear that, although the influence of Wycliffe and his coadjutors on the doctrinal controversies which chiefly interested them was small, their labours produced an effect of which they never dreamed in moulding the language. Had their version perished, the English speech it has so largely fashioned would have been a different thing. Left to themselves, Cranmer and his associates would have produced a noble

the bpgy Cap.  
yunge of ye gol  
pel of syt crut  
ye come of god  
as it is writen  
in plese pepphe  
re. Ioo J send up

amng<sup>r</sup> before ye face of schal make  
a wep<sup>r</sup> wds vntil ye. The vopoe  
of oou crunge in dethere make ye  
red<sup>r</sup> ye wep<sup>r</sup> of ye lovd<sup>r</sup> make ye  
his papis tyntul. Joon was in de  
thert baptisunge & techinge pe lap  
tyme of penance in to certalloun  
of lounes. And alle men of ierusa  
lem wenten out to hym & alle pe  
countre of iude & weren baptized of  
hym in ye flood of jordan. kumse  
techinge her spms. And noon wa  
stord<sup>r</sup> w<sup>r</sup> heas of camelis & a gpr  
dul of syt aboute his leendis. And  
he rec<sup>r</sup> locustis & hony of pe woode  
& schide techinge. Althouger pan  
schal come after me of tohouy lne  
bunge am not to hym. Joon to vnto o  
vntil ye pousage of his lchoun.  
I have baptized you in water tosta  
pe he schal baptize you in ye hoold  
good. And it is wen in po tader  
ychus came fro nazareth of galy  
lee & was baptized of joon in jo  
tan. And anon he techinge up of pe  
water. As heuenes openyd. A peho  
ly goot crunge tosta a culuer  
& dwellinge in hym. And a voyce  
is maid fro heuenes. Thon art my  
louyd soue. in yee I haue schyd.  
And anon ye spyt pntide hym  
in to desert. And he was in desert  
fourty dayes & forty nyghts. & was  
temptid of sathanas. And he was  
w<sup>r</sup> brelpe & gumpens wntid  
den to hym. & scholope after pat joun  
was taken. We came in to galy  
lee schyng pe golpel of pe kung  
dom of god & techinge. For thma

is fulknd. The kyngdom of god  
schal come up. For make ye qz  
to see penance & bulenye to pe  
golpel. And pallinge bntoes  
ye of gahlee. Lery symonit and  
andrew his biopre. techinge net  
ws in to pe see. Sopen pei weren  
schichers. And ietus seide to hem.  
Come yet after me. I schal make  
you to be made schichers of men.  
And anon pe netis fastaken.  
pei sueden hym. And he gon tope  
venys a lath. & jamps of zeb  
de. & joun his biopre. & hem in pe  
wor makinge netis. And anon  
he dedide hem. And zecher he fa  
dir left pe sueden hym. And pei  
wente tope in to capharnaum. And  
anon in pe laboys he gon in  
to pe synagoge. & ant hem. And  
pei wntid on his techinge.  
Sopen he was techinge hem as  
haupnge power. & wt as syphie.  
And in pe synagoge of hent was  
aman in ail vncleue spyt. & he  
craue seyinge. What to us & to pe  
pou ihu of nazareth. hat pou co  
men in tere pe tyme tosto dultipe  
us? Wot pat pou art pe hoold of  
god. And ietus pterende to hym.  
Techinge. Were comis. & go out of  
pe man. And pe vndene goot  
luekyng hym & ayng<sup>r</sup> w<sup>r</sup> grep  
vofte. Weine atth<sup>r</sup> fro hym. And  
alle men wntid den. to pat pei sou  
thi to gder among hem seyinge  
What is pris house yng. What is  
pris new & techinge. For impouer  
he remaine to vncleue spytis  
& pei ober schen to hym. And pe ta  
le of techinge of hym. wente tosta  
uon in to alle pe countre of galylee.  
Anon pei goyng out of pe synago  
ge. camen in to pe hoies of symonit.  
And andrew & jamps & joun. So  
pech<sup>r</sup> ye moder of symonit<sup>r</sup> was



rendering indeed, but in all probability more ornate and more remote from the simplicity of the Saxon. Wycliffe, therefore, though he wrote in large measure by proxy, deserves a high place among the masters and moulders of English. A recent attempt to deprive him of the honour hardly merits refutation, any more than the extraordinary discovery that the Wycliffe Bible was authorised by the Church. The translators would have been only too happy to cite such a licence; but the attitude of the writer of Purvey's Prologue is that of one deprecating censure and dreading persecution.

The most important of Wycliffe's numerous writings are in Latin, and the principal among these are so linked together as to form a coherent system of theology. The English writings are of more temporary and occasional character. Many of them are, no doubt, the work of disciples, scarcely distinguishable in style, and still less in tendency, from Wycliffe's own. The influence of Wycliffe on the English language and literature was most salutary, and it is deeply to be regretted that it did not extend much farther. He could not, like Luther, create a literature, but he could and did prove the fitness of English prose for rendering the noblest works from other languages, and for the discussion of whatever interests mankind. Had an epoch of active literary production followed, English literature would have attained perfection and exerted an European influence much sooner than was the case. The triumph of the hierarchy under the Lancastrian kings, reinforced by the general intellectual stagnation which unaccountably crept all over Europe, destroyed all such anticipations. Wycliffe himself may be blamed for having lent strength to the reaction by the violence and fanaticism of his views on politics and property and other matters outside his proper sphere, but all causes may be summed in one, "the fulness of time was not yet."

*Wycliffe's  
theological  
writings*

It is difficult to form any positive opinion as to the genuineness of the works ascribed to Wycliffe, his sermons excepted. "The Grete sentence of Curs explained," from which we are about to give an extract, lacks sufficient external authentication, but breathes the spirit of the Reformer so completely that even if not from his pen, it may fairly represent the spirit of his writings:

Of this may men see how perilous it is to covet prelacy or great benefice in the Church, sith no man almost cometh to them without pride, vain glory, and simony. Therefore said St. Gregory and the common law of the Church, that honour and prelacy should not be given to them that seek and covet it, but to such men as flee honours and dignity; and the same saith St. Austin and Chrysostom, with other doctors. For Christ teacheth us by St. Paul, that no man shall take honour to him but that is cleped of God, as Aaron was. Therefore Moses and the holy prophet Jeremy, hallowed in his mother's womb, excused them meekly when God bid them take the leading and governing of the people, and the holy prophet Ysaye durst not take this office at God's proffer till he was cleansed from sin by the angel's ministration, and inflamed with God's science and charity. Therefore St. Gregory and St. Austin fled at all their power to be bishops, but sought to live in devotion and study of holy writ and in low degree, and coveted not the highness of their states but with sorrow and great dread of God, and for great need of Christian souls, took this state, not of honour, but of travail and business, as Austin and Jerome witness. Lord! what stirreth us fools, full of ignorance and much sin, that cannot govern one soul well, to seek so busily great states where we shall govern many thousand, and for the least of them all answer at doomsday to the blood of Jesus Christ—guilty of shedding thereof if any

perish by our default? Where strong champions and pillars of holy Church dread so sore to govern a few souls, why rotten festives<sup>1</sup> seek so much charge? Certes it is full sooth that St. John with the gilden mouth saith, with law canoun, that what clerk seeketh or desireth prelacy or primacy in earth, shall find confusion in heaven.

*Character of  
Wycliffe*

None of the portraits of Wycliffe are authentic. A single contemporary testimony describes him as spare and ascetic, which may well be believed of one who led the life of a student all his days. He was even more of a scholar than of a popular leader, "in theology more eminent, in philosophy second to none." The purity of his moral character is shown by the absence of any imputations upon it, notwithstanding the number and exasperation of his enemies. His disinterestedness speaks for itself. His leading characteristic is a fervent zeal for righteousness; if this zeal degenerated into fanaticism he had much excuse in the circumstances of his time. He was less of a statesman than Calvin or Cranmer, and more of a prophet. In many respects he may be compared to Luther, but he lacked Luther's vigorous common sense. His relation to the reformers of the sixteenth century may be compared to that of the men of the Long Parliament to the men of the Revolution; the former were the nobler, and the latter the wiser; but the exaggerated idealism of the first was the indispensable preliminary and condition of the latter's durable achievements.

*The religious  
drama*

While a handful of persecuted men were thus endeavouring to give the English people the Bible in their own language, a knowledge of Scripture history was maintained and diffused by a totally different process, which had at all events the advantages of being as intelligible to the unlettered as to the educated, and of giving no umbrage to the clergy. This was the exhibition of sacred, including ecclesiastical, history to the eye by means of dramatic representations, which historians of the drama have distinguished, although the distinction is practically unimportant, into mysteries and miracle plays according as the subject was scriptural or derived from the legends of the Saints. To these was in process of time added a third class, moralities, allegorical plays in which the characters were wholly or partly personified vices or virtues. By this imperfect means some knowledge of the Bible was preserved among the mass of the people, and an ember kept alight ready to burst out into flame upon a favourable occasion. Equally remarkable in another point of view was the reappearance, in however disfigured a shape, of public dramatic entertainments at a period when the revival of the secular drama seemed inconceivable to the European mind.

*Origin of the  
miracle play*

It is needless to retrace the often told story of the suppression of dramatic performances upon the establishment of Christianity. This was even more complete than hitherto believed, for the drama on the sufferings of Christ attributed to St. Gregory of Nazianzus has been shown to be centuries later than his time. Pantomimic entertainments, indeed, of a low and indecent class, seem to have been largely frequented in the days of Justinian, but after a while even they die out, and the dramatic art is only represented by two very different classes of persons: strolling actors scarcely to be distinguished from

<sup>1</sup> Straws.

jugglers and posture-makers ; and erudite monks and nuns who occasionally produced Latin plays on sacred subjects, which may have been acted by their pupils. The palmary instance is the set of dramas composed in the tenth century by Hroswitha, Abbess of Gandersheim, poor as theatrical compositions, but whose Latinity would have earned them the character of fabrications of a later age, were not the palæographical evidence conclusive of their genuineness. It is not, however, to either of these sources that we can trace the revival of a mediæval drama in the miracle play. This must rather be sought in the dramatic character assumed by the services of the Church as a consequence of their language having become unintelligible to the bulk of the people. It assuredly never entered the minds of the early teachers of Christianity that there would come a time when congregations would be unable to understand Christian services : and so far were they from desiring to keep the people in ignorance that they promoted with all their power the translation of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures into Latin, Syriac, Coptic, and Gothic while these were yet living and spoken languages. When, however, the utterly unforeseen and unexpected came to pass, and Latin was replaced by what must have appeared to the educated man a corrupt jargon, reverence and habitude conspired with less worthy motives to maintain the ancient liturgies and the ancient translations as the vehicles of public worship, and consequently to render this unintelligible to the worshippers. The natural result was a disposition to call in the eye to remedy the failure of the ear, to lay more stress than formerly upon gesture, ceremony, and decoration, and thus to invest liturgy more and more with the character of drama. As observed by the historian of the English drama, just as the ancient plays were divided between the dialogue of the actors and the songs of the chorus, so the liturgy had its epical and lyrical portions ; the former readings from Scripture and showings forth of divine mysteries ; the latter chants and anthems. It was not that dramas were expressly composed for liturgical purposes, but that germs already present in the ritual developed into dramatic representations. At last the religious drama went forth from the Church into the open air as an offshoot of liturgy, a kindred yet independent form of service. By a further important, yet highly natural development, it was allowed to be expressed in the vernacular, not being deemed likely to give birth to heresy or foster a spirit of inquiry. Thus was the drama restored by the very institution which had taken it away, and which would still have denounced it except as the supposed medium of religious edification. The evolutionary process was slow, and is to us obscure, but on the whole it may be concluded that the mystery or miracle play was an accepted institution in Central Europe towards the end of the eleventh century. It does not appear to have taken root in Italy or Spain, in both of which countries it was destined to assume a more cultivated literary form and to develop a higher style of poetry than elsewhere, until the thirteenth century. The earliest known date for a miracle play is in England, where a *Ludus de Sancta Katharina* was acted early in the twelfth century. This may probably have been in Latin. The

vernacular gained ground slowly ; and at one time was the language of the inferior characters, while the more exalted personages spoke the learned tongue, an arrangement exactly analogous to the distribution of Sanscrit and Pracrit between the characters of a Hindoo play. So long as French continued to be the Court language in England, royal personages used it on the stage as a token of their dignity. In one of the mystery plays King Herod gravely remarks that he is tired of talking French.

*Early writers  
of miracle  
plays*

Although the religious drama became as much a part of the national life in England as in any other country, it was probably introduced by the Normans, a livelier people and more impressionable by the mimetic art. The earliest religious play preserved, one on the story of Adam, is apparently Norman, and not Anglo-Norman, as supposed at one time. GEOFFREY OF ST. ALBANS, author of the play on the history of St. Katharine, already mentioned as the first example of its class in England, was a native of Maine. He taught a school at Dunstable, and probably wrote the play for representation by his pupils. The performers, whoever they were, were vested in splendid ecclesiastical apparel borrowed from the Abbey of St. Albans. The night after the representation a fire broke out in Geoffrey's house, and all the borrowed vestments perished. Overcome with confusion and remorse, he made what seemed the only possible atonement by entering the abbey as a monk. Ere long he was abbot, but whether the religious drama flourished under his administration we are not told. The next religious dramatist whose name is preserved, HILARIUS, reverses Geoffrey's case ; he appears to have been an Englishman, but lived and wrote in France. Three of his plays are preserved, upon a miracle of St. Nicholas, the raising of Lazarus, and the history of Daniel. The language is Latin interspersed with French. The drama continued to make progress in England throughout the twelfth century, and, which was far from being the case in France, the subjects seem to have been almost invariably taken from sacred history or legend. Such is the testimony of William Fitzstephen, the biographer of Becket, who, writing between 1170 and 1180, says : " Instead of theatrical exhibitions, instead of scenic plays, London has plays of a holier kind : to wit, representations of the miracles which the holy confessors worked, or of the sufferings in which the constancy of the martyrs was gloriously confirmed." Fitzstephen had been Becket's intimate friend and confidant, and it is clear from his evidence that the sacred drama was in his time encouraged by the Church. It is remarkable, however, that he seems to speak merely of miracle plays or dramatic exhibitions founded on the legends of martyrs and confessors, and ignores the mystery or Scriptural drama, which was always the most popular in England, and to which almost all extant specimens belong. Whatever the nature of the representations, it would seem a fair inference from Fitzstephen's words that they were public and accessible to all, and not merely private performances within the walls of an abbey or convent. Not long after, about 1220, mention is found of a play on the Resurrection being acted in the churchyard of Beverley Minster.

Two circumstances are now to be mentioned which had the greatest



influence upon the development of the miracle play. One was the institution, decreed in 1264, but not fully effected until 1311, of the festival of Corpus Christi, involving a great procession in the open air. The time fixed for this display, the Thursday after Trinity Sunday, was well adapted for open-air shows and performances: while, from the religious character of the ceremony, the jousts and games which might otherwise have amused the populace were out of place, and the problem was how to combine enjoyment with edification. Nothing could seem fitter for this purpose than the miracle play, which equally met the popular demand for amusement and the ecclesiastical requisite that the entertainments of Corpus Christi should partake of the nature of a religious solemnity. Here the second important circumstance to which we have referred came in, a circumstance as distinctly mediæval as the institution of Corpus Christi itself. The trade guilds, in England at least, came forward to charge themselves with the expense and assume the direction of the representation, and in many cities England had at length a national drama, rude indeed, but appreciated by the people, patronised by the clergy, not wholly slighted by the aristocracy, and preface and presage of the drama to come.

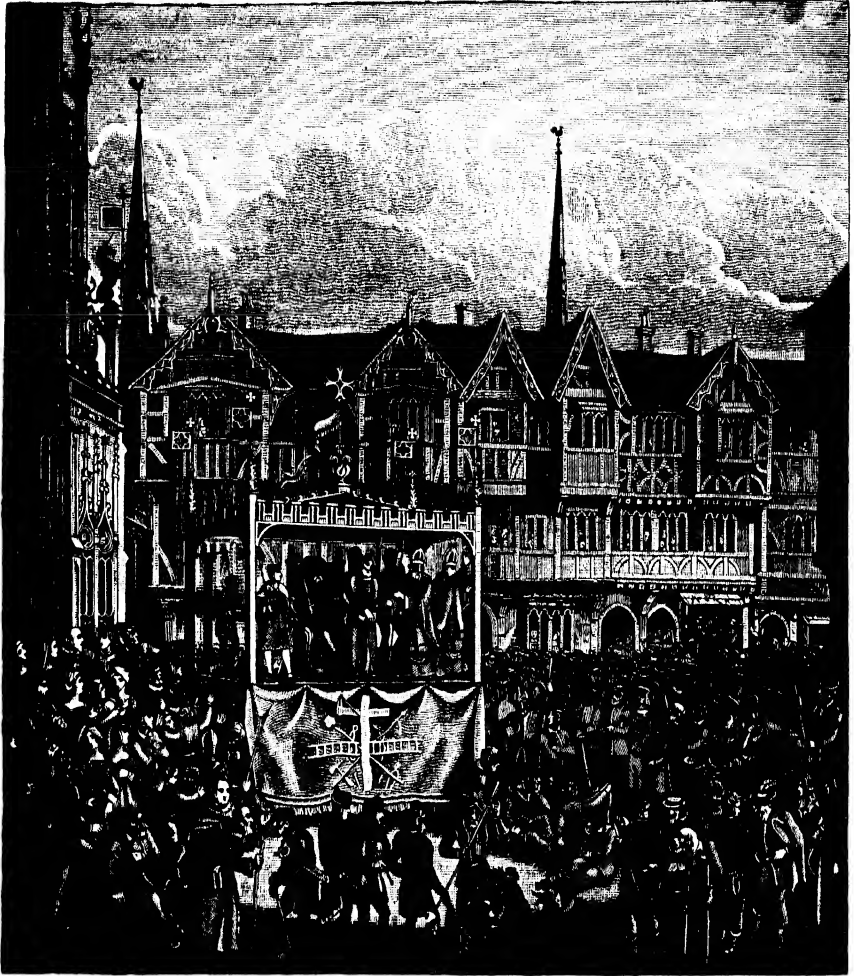
The very name of guild, except with reference to small associations founded for some object of limited scope and usually of more or less of an amateur character, is strange to us at this day. We have to consider all that the Guildhall implies, and to reflect that the great City Companies were once guilds in the strictest sense of the term, ere we can in any measure realise the state of things prevailing when every workman was actually the member of a guild, and bound by the regulations which it pleased this body to enforce. Of the two great classes of guilds which covered England in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the social guild generally existing for the sake of charitable works, and the craft guild or association of workmen and tradesmen, we are here only concerned with the latter. This, with its offshoot the merchants' guild, was a kind of minor corporation, able within limits to organise its members, and levy contributions upon them for any legal purpose. When once the idea had found currency that it besemed such a body to give a dramatic exhibition for the enhancement of the Corpus Christi solemnity, the future of these entertainments was assured, for the resources of the guilds were extensive, and mutual emulation guaranteed their being exerted to the uttermost. *Κεραμίδες κεραμῆι κοτέει, καὶ τέκτονι τέκτων.* An additional incitement was afforded by the fines levied upon the crafts which failed to give the performance allotted to them, or broke down in the representation. Each guild was entrusted as far as possible with a performance in harmony with the character of its own craft; thus the building of the Ark was represented by the shipwrights. The number of these associations seems startling, until the great subdivision of labour in the Middle Age is considered, and the jealousy lest one craft should encroach on the domain of another. We hear of bladesmiths, sheathers, buckle-makers, girdelers, corvisors (shoemakers), spicers, fletchers (arrow-makers), pinner, needlers, and whittawers (workers in white leather).

*Connection of  
the trade guilds  
with dramatic  
performances*

The co-operation of the various guilds rendered it practicable to exhibit

*System of  
dramatic  
exhibition*

one great piece composed of a number of consecutive plays, so arranged as to embrace the entire course of sacred history, each company taking one. The machinery employed carried us back to the days when Thespis and his fellow-performers—if Horace may be believed—perambulated Attica in a cart. It consisted of two movable stages, one the *pageant* (Greek *pegma* or Latin



Representation of a Mystery Play

*From a drawing by David Lee in Sharp's "Coventry Mysteries," 1825*

*pagina*—plank) or platform upon which the representation was given, a term now transferred to the show itself; and a scaffold for the spectators. The stage for the performers was in two storeys, in the lower of which they dressed and undressed, while the piece was acted in the upper. The scaffolds, with a slow solemnity worthy of the Trojan Horse or the Car of Juggernaut, passed through the town and paused at places convenient for a concourse of spectators. When the representation was finished, platform and scaffold moved on, and

a new company and a new piece came forward in their place. A stage direction seems to imply that the performance was not strictly confined to the "pageant"; but that King Herod, at least when extra furious, "ragged in the street." There could be little attempt at scenery, but details of costume and stage fittings are abundantly supplied by the account books of the municipalities, when these have been preserved, and are full of curiosity and interest. The representation of Paradise naturally surpassed the powers of the scenic artists of that period, but they were perfectly at home in Hell, and especial pains were taken with Hell mouth, delineated as the literal mouth of an enormous monster, and with the pitchforks and clubs of the demons. The latter implements were considerably made of wadding: but the gunpowder which the fiends are enjoined to carry about various parts of their persons, if not mere *brutum fulmen*, in which case it might as well have been omitted, must have been productive of considerable inconvenience to the performer. The whole of this department of the representation is a strange mixture of the terrible and the ludicrous, entirely in the spirit of the grotesque carvings of cathedral corbels; and the semblances of the fiends preserved in some contemporary delineations offer strong affinity to the figures in ancient editions of the *Ars Moriendi*. Elsewhere there is abundant simplicity, but no intentional irreverence; the comic scenes, coarse as they sometimes are, being confined to inferior characters, and kept apart from the main action. Music was not wanting, and some of the few songs which have been preserved possess real grace and lyrical spirit. The following are examples of the songs of shepherds at the Nativity:—

As I outrode this enderes<sup>1</sup> night,  
Of three jolly shepherds I saw a sight,  
And all about their fold a star shone bright.  
They sang terli terlow,  
So meryly the shepherds their pipes can blow.

Down from heaven from heaven so high,  
Of angels ther came a great company,  
With mirth and joy and great solemnity,  
They sang terli terlow,  
So meryly the shepherds their pipes can blow.

One shepherd offers the infant Saviour his flute, another his hat, another his mittens, in language simple and quaint, but embodying the sentiment, "Take this, O Lord, 'tis all I have to give." In another version a shepherd offers his wife's old stockings, and a lad, foreseeing that the infant Christ will one day have occasion for a nuthook, presents his own:—

To pull down apples, pears and plums.  
Old Joseph shall not need to hurt his thumbs.

It is easy to realise how much life and colour the miracle play must have brought into the existence of mediæval society, and to what extent the happy idea of making its representation the business of a particular order of the

<sup>1</sup> Last.



Shepherds presenting their Gifts to the Infant Christ

From a "Horæ" printed by Verard, circ. 1490

community must have rendered it a matter of general public interest : with what anxiety Corpus Christi day must have been looked forward to ; how bright and brilliant the show must have been under favourable auspices ; how grievous the disappointment of bad weather ; how free the criticisms of the respective guilds on the doings of their colleagues and rivals ; and, in spite of ludicrous blunders and deliberate travesties, how important an educational influence the performances must have been for the unlettered man. How far misrepresentation, innocent or otherwise, could be carried, especially when a farcical element entered into the performance, may be illustrated by a scene in the mystery of Mary Magdalen (a play with much affinity to the morality, and where, though in rhyme, alliteration is systematically employed), where the Emperor Tiberius is exhibited in the act of holding a solemn service for the worship of Mahomet. The heathen priest of "Mahound" (by a singular irony of fortune the inveterate enemy of idolatry was all over Europe taken for an idol himself) is attended by a clerk, and is as particular as any clergyman of the Greek or Latin rite about the correctness of his vestments and the due decoration of his altar :—

Now, my clerke Hawkyn, for love of me,  
 Loke fast myne awter were arayed.  
 Goo, ring a bellé two or three ;  
 Lythly, childe, it be not delayd ;  
 For here xall be a grete solemnyté ;  
 Loke, boy, thou do it with a brayd.<sup>1</sup>

The boy misbehaves himself, and is beaten, but upon being taken into favour again, is thus addressed by his master :

Now, boy, to my awter I wyll me dresse,  
 On xall my westment and myn aray.  
*Boy.* Nor than the lesse wyll I expresse  
 Lyke as lengthy for the service of this day.  
*Leccio mahoundys, viri fortissimi saracenorum*  
*Glabriosum ad glumendum glumandinorum :*

with three more lines of gibberish followed by a free translation, ending :

*Grant you grace to dye on the galowes.*

This recalls Bruce's benediction (in English) to the Abyssinian monks, "Lord send you all a halter, as he did to the Acab Saat," a turbulent ecclesiastic who had been hanged some time previously. "To which they, thinking that I was recommending them to the prayers of the departed patriarch, devoutly responded, Amen ! so be it !"

Another source of misrepresentation in the religious drama was the necessity for adapting it in some respects to the comprehension of the ignorant. "As," remarks Mr. Courthope, "many of the spectators would not have understood the term 'high priest,' Annas and Caiaphas are called 'bishops.' When Pilate is first approached by the leaders of the Jews he tells

<sup>1</sup> Loud noise.

them they must bring their cause before him 'in parliament.' In order to obtain a place for setting up the cross, negotiations have to be entered into with a 'squire,' who gives a lease of Calvary, but is cheated in the transaction."

Of the authors of these plays little is known. The difficulty which they

evidently experience in accommodating their matter to the restraints of metre and rhyme, which occasionally renders them very obscure, seems to show that they were not practised writers, and the dogmatic purpose and unity of plan apparent in the York mysteries in particular would almost justify the attribution of most of them to a single author, who may have been either a layman or a cleric. The freedom of some might seem to exclude clerical authorship, but the manners of the age and the intimate association of clergy and laity must be taken into account. Many of the pieces which have come down to us as performed at different places may have been derived from some common source, now lost. At a very late period we encounter a hired professional poet, John Green, who is paid by the men of Coventry

*Author-  
ship of the  
religious  
dramas*



From "The Harrying of Hell"

*British Museum Arundel MS.*

five shillings for his play, exactly the amount awarded to the trumpeter.

Perhaps the oldest example of an English mystery that has come down to us is *The Harrying of Hell*, founded on perhaps the only Christian legend which it is safe to ascribe to a Buddhist origin. Though a rhymed dialogue this is scarcely a dramatic piece, and would hardly have borne acting. It is simply a dispute between Christ and Satan, in the course of which Satan is

*Early  
Mysteries*

2390

**A** Calpe in paltre in nonse pteho  
 And pntof of all pempte ppe do t ppeal a ray  
 Ther is no lord of lord in lordchap to me by the  
 non losslye non lossimof ovyz lossyng is my lay  
 Of bolte & of bolde nos i bol oboz moif y bolle  
 of mayn & of myght i mast ovyz man  
 i dygo w my doltynuo y delyt doltu to helle  
 for bolte of hobyu & of hesty i am byngo sotyrynd

**T**am y comelyste byngo clad in gletaryngo golde  
 sa & y comelyste by y may be sotyde a stode  
 i bolde at my bytt all byght upon molde

**T**sa and comely i am byappyd in a bymyth stode  
 so bymyth so comely bolte cytoyo & bone  
 to my paleyo byl i passe full yest i zoll plyth  
 so duby so doltyn bolte mo bo dono  
 outo my pal paleyo y byl byth ful yest

**T**byth by fto my stode i byppo doltu in hest  
 to my byz hallyo i hestome in my bay  
 so myntyett of mynt bolte up a good blast  
 byth i go to pchallmo's channge my dyay

**T**byl be go byngt ttoymo  
 stoy ppeyng out of zo ppeuo  
 mo thynklyth be zo ppeuo stoy  
 ho sala hano i folleto stoy  
 the glomyng of zan gay stoy  
 adyldyo blood pal byon vo dy

**T**ay name is byngo bakazay

informed that he has thrown *ames ace*, and which terminates by the Saviour's triumph and return from Hades with the ransomed souls of the patriarchs of the old dispensation. The so-called Digby Mysteries include the drama on Mary Magdalen already mentioned.

There are four series of mystery plays composed for consecutive representation at Corpus Christi or some other high festival : the Chester, the York, the Townley, and the Coventry. A fifth, the Beverley, only known from the records of the town, is lost, but may have been merely another version of the York. Other towns probably had their sets of performances, which perhaps they borrowed from their neighbours. There are several notices of performances of separate plays at Lincoln and other places.

*The Chester  
Mysteries*

The Chester Mysteries may probably be the oldest now in existence, but there is some doubt as to their history. In a note upon a manuscript, backed by a local tradition, but both too recent to carry much weight, they are said to have been written by a priest named Randal Higgenet, who seems an apocryphal personage, under the mayoralty of Sir John Arneway, 1327-28. Arneway was, however, in fact mayor from 1268 to 1276, and his name seems to be an error for Richard Ernes. It is nevertheless possible that plays of earlier date were incorporated into a series prepared for continuous representation by the guilds about 1328. It speaks for the antiquity of such representations at Chester that these were there held not on Corpus Christi as usual but at Whitsuntide, as though the performance dated from an earlier period than the institution in 1311. There are twenty-five plays in all, some, such as that on the history of Balaam and his ass, upon subjects not treated elsewhere. The performances continued to the end of the sixteenth century, and were witnessed in 1594 by Archdeacon Rogers, whose account is one of our most reliable sources of information respecting the mechanical conduct of the show. He says that nine plays were performed on the Monday, nine on the Tuesday, and seven on the Wednesday. None were of any great length.

*The York  
Mysteries*

The York series of Mysteries is one of the most valuable of any, and the most extensive, including forty-eight pieces. The manuscript from which it is derived originally belonged to the Corporation of York, and hence has an official character. It remained in the custody of the Corporation until 1579, when it was submitted to Archbishop Sandys for correction, and his Grace locked it up. It has been most ably edited by Miss Lucy Toulmin Smith, who dates it about 1440, but the plays are probably a full century earlier. The first mention of performances at York is in 1378; and in 1415 Roger Burton, city clerk, compiled a catalogue of the performances then habitual and of the guilds by which they were produced. The dramatic taste was strong at York, and plays independent of the guilds were occasionally performed, among others one on the Lord's Prayer, alluded to by Wycliffe. The course of the representations is the same as elsewhere, being a series of scenes comprehending all the most dramatic incidents of Scripture history from the Creation to the Day of Judgment.



Theriff here and mynnyng

2dve at firste I fynde and seele  
whether you haſt to pe forest ſonſt  
you ſhuld haue tolde me for myr ſeele  
than we were to ſtyle banyne bonyt

Do.

Now dyme pe thir noȝt dede a deſe  
for till accounte it coſt pe noȝt  
I hundereth mynnyng I wanne wele  
is wente ſon I pis weke <sup>and</sup> wreought  
thid when I made endymt // God gyffe me meſore fyre

Of eny ſlle a thymt  
he bad put I ſhuld bym  
of beeftis and ſonles zymt

Of ſlle algynde a peyre

yo:

2dve certis and we ſhulde ſtaye ſeo ſtuthe  
And ſo be ſayyd as pe ſaye here  
my comodeys and my coſynes linte  
pam wolde I wente with us in ſcare

Do wende in pe wittir it were wittis  
loke in and loke with outen were

Do.

Alas my byſſ me is full hurt  
I byſſ one lymt pis linc to lere

xxv.

Dere modir mende yomr moode // for we ſall wende you with

yo:

my ſendis put I pva woode  
Are one ſlowen with ſlood

Nowe thanke me god al goode

ij filia.  
that do has ſummitid gyth

godir of pis worke nowe wolde ye noȝt wene  
that alle ſhuld wittis to wittis wam

ij filia.

*The Townley  
Mysteries*

The Townley series of Mysteries differs from the rest, not in plan or structure, but in being partly the composition of a true though unknown poet, one endowed with remarkable gifts both of humour and of tragic expression, and under no restraint in making use of either. His work, which embraces a fourth of the collection, is known by the peculiarity of the nine-line stanza employed by him. The spirit of his work is intensely mediæval, whether in his ghastly and almost revolting pictures of pain and woe; or in the broad farce of his comic interludes, whose buffoonery was then quite compatible with reverence. Such descriptions as those of the tortures of the Saviour in the Mystery of the Passion, or of corruption in the grave in the *Lazarus*, are terrifying in their naked realism; while nothing can be more comical than the deportment of the knavish shepherd who robs his honest colleagues of a sheep, and tries to pass it off as his own child in its cradle. Four of the Townley Mysteries are nearly identical with others in the York series. They take their name from being found in a MS. formerly belonging to Colonel Townley, the donor of the Townley marbles to the British Museum, but are sometimes called the "Woodkirk" from an erroneous belief that they were written at Woodkirk, a dependency of the monastery of St. Oswald at Nostel, near Wakefield, in which town they seem to have been represented. They number thirty-one. From an allusion to some peculiarities of female costume introduced by Richard II.'s Queen, Anne of Bohemia, one at least appears to have been composed after her nuptials; the others seem to be of about the same period, and the most probable date is the reign of Henry IV.

The Coventry Mysteries, or *Ludus Coventriæ*, comprise forty-two pieces. A manuscript note of late date states them to have been connected with the Grey Friars of Coventry. It has been doubted, however, whether they were not the production of itinerants, and acted in different parts of the country.

*Popularity of  
the miracle  
play*

The miracle play deserves much praise as a thoroughly healthy and natural outgrowth of its age, constituting a really popular drama. The writers on the whole held the middle way between the stage and the pulpit very successfully; without losing sight of the religious instruction, which was the *rationale* of their existence, they kept the attention of the spectators fully alive. This was no doubt in great measure owing to their close alliance with the guilds, who knew well what the public required, and to the careful organisation which provided for the rapid succession of performances. At the same time this mechanical procedure discouraged originality; every piece was a stock piece; when the repertory was once complete, no novelties were wanted; there was no more demand for a new Noah or Abraham than for a new Punch and Judy. The religious drama, therefore, was incapable of development, and its principal literary service was to keep the love of the drama alive in the hearts of the people, ready to create a new theatre when it should itself have become obsolete. Though little connection can be traced between it and the theatre of Shakespeare, it was the latter's precursor, and in this point of view claims a more important place in our literary history than the merely academical and classical play.

Scripture history is sufficiently extensive to supply the mediæval dramatist with a multitude of personages, but he would not have been permitted, even had he possessed the ability, to deviate from the traditional estimate of his characters. He must not speculate on the motives of Judas, or seek to place himself at Pharaoh's point of view. His invention, therefore, is chiefly shown in the introduction or expansion of subordinate characters. There is no dramatic necessity, for example, for a conversation between the men who are fastening Christ to the cross, but the dramatist seizes the opportunity of manifesting his rude strength and realistic power. Comic divergences from the sacred text are more frequent. All the versions of the Ark story get infinite fun out of Noah's wife, of whom Genesis records nothing remarkable, but who is here exhibited as a consummate vixen. The good lady really stands on a higher moral plane than her husband, for she objects to survive her friends, whose fate is to him a matter of indifference. But if right in substance she is grievously incorrect in form, and her shrewishness and Noah's distraction must have provoked peals of laughter. It is curious to find a similar antediluvian comic element in a Portuguese *auto* performed as late as 1780. Noah, being about to build the ark, sends his servant to engage a carpenter, when a discussion arises about payment. The carpenter is ready to take Noah's note of hand; but his wife, the counterpart of Mrs. Noah, insists on money down: she must pay her debts before she is drowned, she says.<sup>1</sup> Another source of the comic is the bombast of Herod, who seems a combination of Herod the Great with Herod Agrippa, "whose voice was the voice of a god and not of a man," and whose claims to universal supremacy might almost be taken for an oblique satire upon the Pope's:

*Humorous  
and other en-  
bellishments*

I am King of all mankynde,  
I bid, I beat, I loose, I bynde,  
I maister the moon, take this in mynde,  
That I am most of might.  
I am the greatest above degree,  
That is, that was, that ever shall be:  
The sonne it dare not shine on me,  
As I bid him go downe.  
No rain to fall shall now be free;  
Nor no lord have that liberty,  
That dare abide, and I bid flee,  
But I shall crack his crowne.

Rants like this, and not Herod's iniquities, originated the proverbial phrase, "out-Heroding Herod."

Passages of real tenderness and pathos are not infrequent. The play of the Shepherds has been mentioned in this respect, and the sacrifice of Isaac is very touching. One of the prettiest situations is that of the venerable Simeon, divided between his hopes and his doubts as he strives to rationalise the prediction of Isaiah:—

*Occasional  
tenderness  
and*

<sup>1</sup> In fact, the comic female of whom Noah's wife is an instance is older than Noah himself, and may be traced back to the earliest legends of savages, such as the Uganda tradition, for example, representing the Creator's work as marred by the perverse obstinacy of woman.

A Lorde, muche is thy power !  
 A wonder find I written here,  
 It saythe a maiden fair and clear  
 Shall conceive and bear  
 A sonne called Emanuel.  
 But of this leeve<sup>1</sup> I never a del.<sup>2</sup>  
 It is wrong written, as I have hede,  
 Or elles wonder were.  
 He that wrote this was a fone<sup>3</sup>  
 To write a virgin hereupon,  
 That should conceive without help of man ;  
 This writing marvels me.  
 I will scrape it away anon.  
 There as a virgin is written in,  
 I will write, a good womap  
 For so it should be.

ANNA VIDUA.

Simeon, father, sooth I see  
 That Christ shall come our boot to be  
 From the Father in majestie  
 On mankynde for to mynne.<sup>4</sup>  
 And when he cometh, leve<sup>5</sup> thou me,  
 He will have mercye and pittie  
 On his folk to make them free,  
 And save them of their synne.

Simeon refers again to the scroll with which he has tampered :

O Lorde, how may this be to-day  
 That I wrote last I find away,  
 And of red letters in stout array  
 A Virgin written thereon.  
 Nay, hereafter, I will assay  
 Whether this miracle be vereye  
 And scrape this word written so gaye,  
 And write, a good woman.

When he next consults the scroll he finds Virgin restored in letters of gold, and he surrenders.

*Acme and  
 decline of the  
 religious  
 drama*

The fifteenth century may be regarded as the golden age of the miracle play in England. Retaining their democratic organisation, the festivals were nevertheless patronised by persons of rank, and the general appreciation endured well into the sixteenth century. The spread of culture must in process of time have destroyed entertainments of such essential and irremediable *naïveté*, as has happened even in Roman Catholic countries except in such isolated instances as the Ober Ammergau Passion Play (a most remarkable counterpart to the Persian dramatic representations which still annually take place at Kerbela in commemoration of the martyrdom of Ali) and the similar performances which even now linger in Catalonia. The Reformation accelerated the decay of the religious drama, partly from the incompatibility of its doctrines with the veneration of saints and other features of the old

<sup>1</sup> Believe.

<sup>2</sup> Bit.

<sup>3</sup> Fond, foolish.

<sup>4</sup> Think.

<sup>5</sup> Believe.

miracle play, but still more from the general mutation of the religious atmosphere. Religion had become a matter of more serious concern than of old, and the familiarity of treatment inseparable from the miracle play now appeared indecorous, even offensive. On the other side was to be set the love of shows innate in the human breast, which led the people of York in Elizabeth's time to petition that the representations might be continued. But the dean, Matthew Hutton, afterwards archbishop, deemed that this could not be; nor, considering the strength of the Roman Catholic reaction, could he well have judged otherwise. The men of Coventry fought hard for their "Hox Tuesday" (Hock Tide is the week following Easter) and their entertainment was alternately "laid down" and temporarily revived. They tried to meet the changed circumstances of the times by the compromise of a play on the Destruction of Jerusalem, with which none but a Jew could find fault; and by another on a subject of national interest, "The Destruction of the Danes," perhaps with an oblique reference to the Spaniards. But this would not answer, and when we find that the mounting of the plays, instead of being as formerly the spontaneous undertaking of the citizens, was let out to a contractor, we must acknowledge that the institution had lived its appointed time. The Elizabethan drama came in for the entertainment of the better classes of society; the inferior, it is to be feared, were thrown back upon brutal sports, such as bull and bear-baiting, of which for a long time to come we hear more than we were wont to hear in the middle ages, though they were by no means unknown to Fitzstephen in the twelfth century.

As already intimated, the morality was a later development than the mystery or miracle play. It took its rise from the introduction of allegorical personages into the latter, and, the innovation proving popular, plays came to be written in which the personages were entirely allegorical. In the hands of a great poet like Calderon, this form rose to a great elevation of poetry; and although England produced no Calderon, and the abstractions of the morality could not vie in human interest with the realities set forth in the Scriptural or miracle play, the new form nevertheless promoted dramatic art by compelling the playwright to depend upon his own powers of invention both for character and plot. The morality endured to so late a period that Shakespeare writes of one of its stock characters, "the Vice," as an impersonation existing in his day. One of the oldest, and perhaps the most interesting of the genuine mediæval moralities is *The Castle of Perseverance*, where Mankind is represented as hesitating between the admonition of his good and the allurements of his evil angel, yielding to the latter, repenting, standing like Piers Plowman a siege in the Castle of Perseverance, garrisoned by all the Christian Virtues, apostatising again, but ultimately delivered by free grace. The following is a specimen of the poetry, which is not devoid of lyrical spirit:

*The Morality*

## THE BAD ANGEL.

Cum on, man, wherefore hast thou care?  
 Go we to the world, I rede thee, blyve.<sup>1</sup>  
 For then thou shalt soon ryght well fare,  
 In case if thou thynke for to thryve.  
 No lord schal thee be lycke.  
 Take the world to thine entent,  
 And let thy love be thereon lent  
 With gold and silver and rich rent.  
 Anon shalt thou be riche.

## HUMANUM GENUS.

Now syth thou hast behetyn<sup>2</sup> me so,  
 I will go with thee and essay.  
 I ne lette for friend nor foe,  
 But with the world I will go play  
 Certes a little throw.  
 In this world is all my trust,  
 To lyve in lykyng and in lust :  
 Have he and I onys<sup>3</sup> cust,<sup>4</sup>  
 We shall not part, I trowe.

## THE GOOD ANGEL.

A! nay, man! for Christes blod!  
 Cum again by street and stile!  
 The world is wicked and full wod,<sup>5</sup>  
 And thou shalt levyn but a while,  
 What covetest thou to win?  
 Man, think on thine ending day,  
 When thou shalt be closed under clay,  
 And if thou think of that array  
 Certes thou shalt not synne.

Other examples of the morality, such as *Everyman*, *Hucke Scornor*, are outside the limits of the mediæval period, and will be more conveniently noticed with the poetry of the age to which they belong.

*Place of the  
 miracle play  
 in dramatic  
 history*

The miracle play, as will have been perceived, owed nothing to literature, and in return literature owes nothing to it. It did not depend for its acceptance upon literary qualities, but partly upon religious sanctions, partly upon the brightness and colour which its occasional representation brought into homely lives, partly upon its gratification of the mimetic instinct common to the majority of mankind. In many parts of Europe guilds and confraternities still walk in procession on Corpus Christi Day, and in Italy, says Mr. Pollard, "little children toddle among them, dressed, some with a tiny sheepskin and staff to represent St. John the Baptist; others in sackcloth as St. Mary Magdalene; others in a blue robe with a little crown, as the Blessed Virgin; others again with an aureole tied to their little heads, as the infant Saviour." It allied piety with entertainment much in the fashion of a modern oratorio; but while the enjoyment of the latter presupposes a certain amount of culture and a certain

<sup>1</sup> Quickly.<sup>2</sup> Ordered.<sup>3</sup> Once.<sup>4</sup> Kissed<sup>5</sup> Mad.

amount of money, the miracle play was comprehensible by the least educated, and accessible to the humblest. Regarded merely as literature, its pretensions and its performances alike are insignificant. In but one country of Europe was it able to rise to the dignity of poetry, and that chiefly in the department of moralities, where personified virtues and vices afforded more ample field for dramatic invention and poetical embellishment than the conventional and stereotyped figures of Scriptural characters and saints. An unusually fortunate conflux of circumstances, the coincidence in a corner of Europe of a great age of dramatic literature with an exalted condition of religious feeling, made the Spanish sacramental Auto in Calderon's hands a permanent addition to letters, though one incapable either of development or revival. Elsewhere it remained sterile, in so far as visible addition to literature was concerned, but indirectly its effects were highly important. It preserved a conception of the drama in the minds of humble people throughout rude ages, it expanded their views and helped them to realise bygone times and distant regions of the world. It is interesting, for example, to find "drombodaryes" provided for the journey of the Three Kings of the East, with the announcement that they will cover a hundred miles a day. If the actual contribution to the stock of knowledge was small, the stimulus afforded to curiosity was great. The peculiar system of its production seemed admirably though unintentionally adapted to make it a theme of living interest to large bodies of men. Each guild had its own piece; every craftsman participated more or less in its production, esteemed its success a personal satisfaction, and scrutinised the performance of his competitors with the interest not merely of a spectator but of a rival. The mere text was the least part; costume, rehearsal, and representation conspired to keep a considerable portion of the community for a time in an ideal world. Hence a taste for the drama was kept alive which, when the performance of the miracle play was checked by the Reformation, reacted in another direction, and became the nutriment of the popular drama which might otherwise, as in Italy, have remained the amusement of courts and polite society. The good burghers of York, whom we have seen chafing at Dean Hutton's inevitable decision that the miracle play must be performed there no more, were in the best possible frame of mind to form the audience of a Shakespeare. Nor is it, perhaps, entirely an accident that Shakespeare himself came from the neighbourhood of one of its principal seats, the good town of Coventry, where it was occasionally performed even in his own day; where a dramatic tradition of some sort must have existed; which contributed players to the splendid festivals at Kenilworth Castle; where, in after years, Sarah Kemble became Sarah Siddons; and which witnessed the birth of Ellen Terry.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

THE necessity for treating the poetry of Lydgate along with the poetry of Gower, and for offering a connected view of the English religious drama throughout the entire period of its existence, has compelled us to infringe strict chronological order, and trench largely upon the not too opulent literature of the fifteenth century. No opportunity, however, has as yet presented itself for a general survey of a period by no means devoid of interesting features, although, paradoxical as this may seem, one of the most memorable is its barrenness.

*Invention of  
printing in  
the fifteenth  
century*

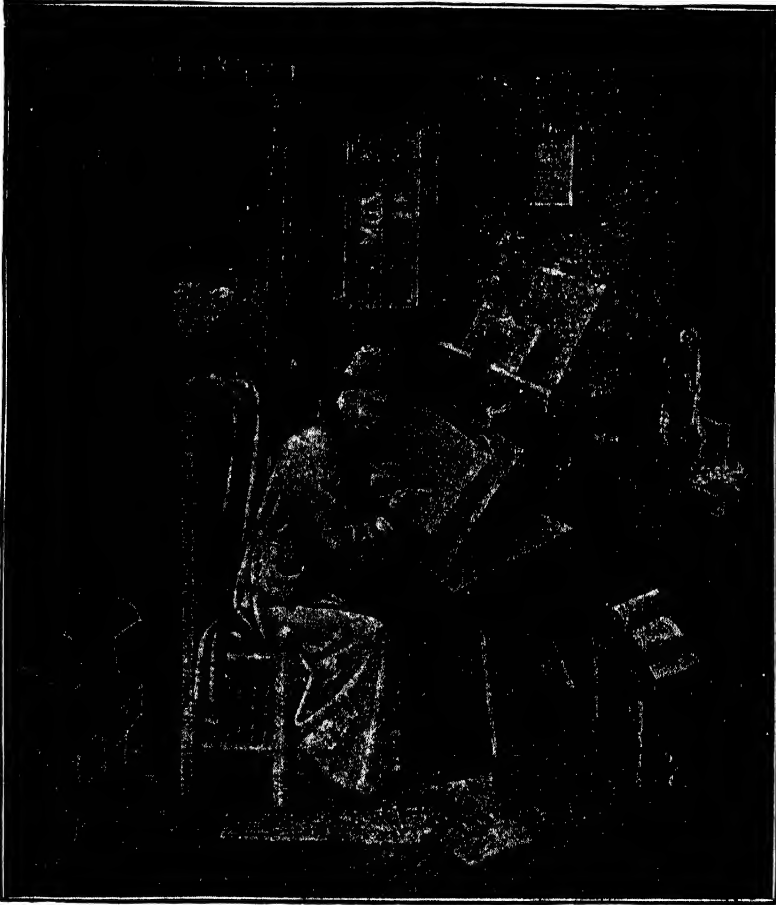
By a single achievement the fifteenth century rendered greater service to literature than any previous age had performed, or than any future age can hope to rival. This, obviously, is the invention of printing; of all the one requiring the least genius in the inventor. Nothing can be more humiliating to the pride of human intellect than to observe the tardiness of mankind in making so simple a discovery; how Greeks and Romans and Saracens stumbled on the brink of it without ever stumbling upon it; how the Chinese actually did make it without turning it to account (as it does not seem to have exerted the least influence upon Chinese literature); how mediæval Europe remained in utter ignorance of the Chinese feat, and was at last led to printing by the path of wood-engraving. The discovery, then, is no special credit to the intelligence of the fifteenth century; although, like the other marvel of the age, the discovery of America, which ought to have been made long before, it is a reproach to the intelligence of preceding generations. While ever grateful to the age for two such performances, we cannot allow that they contribute much to redeem it from that sterility of original genius which, until we approach its close, is its most distinguishing characteristic

*General intel-  
lectual sterility  
of the age*

This would not have been anticipated by one qualified to take a comprehensive view of the situation at the end of the preceding epoch. The fourteenth century had not merely produced great writers, but writers who had accomplished not only great but novel things, and who seemed to have launched literature upon new paths of excellence. Petrarch in his lyric poetry, indeed, had left no room for a successor; but his epistles and philosophical treatises opened up long vistas. Boccaccio might well have founded a school of



novelists, and both his epical poetry and Chaucer's invited imitation; while the latter poet had shown what an immense and unused field lay open for the delineator of popular manners. Froissart had indicated one equally rich in the delineation of courts and camps on the familiar side; and Villani had made an excellent beginning in regular historical narrative. Yet it was long ere any of these men had a successor to be named in the same breath with



A Scholar's Room in the Fifteenth Century

*From a MS. in the Royal Library at Brussels*

him. The one world-famous book of the succeeding age, the *Imitation of Christ*, is the work of a mystic independent of Time, and might have been written in any century of the Christian era. The only two other writers with any claim to genius, the authors of *Amadis of Gaul* and of the *Morte d'Arthur*, revert to the ideals of former ages, which Chaucer had derided as obsolete. If they are at all influenced by Boccaccio it is by his early romances, in no respect by the momentous new departure which he had taken in the *Decameron*. The ideal of the fifteenth century is not literature but scholarship.

Far more than the eighteenth does it deserve the reproach of an unimaginative age ; far more than the nineteenth of an utilitarian one. Many causes, all efficient to a certain extent, might be assigned for this paralysis of creative power ; but the principal is without doubt that the superior minds of the age found themselves in the position of disciples. The mediæval ideals had attained their highest development, and, had there been no Black Death and no Great Schism, must still have passed away. It is impossible to say what would have resulted had there not been a force in the background ready to take their place.

*Study of  
classical  
literature*

For a century past classical antiquity had been slowly rising from its grave, and about the beginning of the fifteenth century presented itself as qualified to fill the gap in men's affections and imaginations created by the decay of the feudal, chivalric, and ecclesiastical ideals. This, in the domains of literature and art, it could only achieve if its superiority to the past were admitted, and to admit this was to convert those who might otherwise have been masters into pupils and disciples. In the department of art this was of little practical moment, for although the theory of art might be revolutionised by the application of new principles, few ancient works were extant to discourage the artist by the constant sentiment of inferiority. He felt, on the other hand, inspirited by his obvious progress beyond the only works of painting and sculpture with which he could compare his own. It was far otherwise with the author who had the masterpieces of antiquity before him, and who must fail equally whether he attempted or renounced the impossible task of excelling them. It cannot be a subject of wonder, then, that originality should depart from literature until the antique spirit, entering and interpenetrating the mediæval world, should have produced something different from either. The literary heroes of this transition period were not men of genius, for genius was temporarily extinct, but the editors, commentators, grammarians, and archaeologists, whose business it was to bring the new-found treasure to light, and make it available for the entire educated community. The period of their predominance, which might be roughly identified with the century and a half intervening between the commencement of the Great Schism and the sack of Rome, is rightly called the Renaissance, and the men themselves are comprehended under the denomination of Humanists.

*Decline of  
originality*

That, nevertheless, the pursuit of classical studies, although an important, was not the sole cause of the age's deficiency in creative power, appears from the instance of England, where although the progress of humanism was slow, the intellectual sterility was as great as elsewhere. Chaucer's successors, as we have seen, though his enthusiastic disciples, could make little or nothing of the heritage which he had bequeathed to them, and no new ground was broken in any quarter. Something, no doubt, is to be ascribed to the ecclesiastical bigotry of the Lancastrian kings, and their repression of the biblical study and free religious inquiry which were at the time above all things congenial to the national spirit. But this explanation, though true as far as it goes, does not take us very far. From some unknown cause a universal blight had fallen upon the highest faculties of the human intellect, and the

only remedy was that adopted by the humanists, to imbibe the spirit of antiquity, and expect the things that should come. It is true that to these excellent persons the knowledge of antiquity appeared an end sufficient in itself without ulterior purpose, but this conviction was indispensable if the study was to be pursued with the energy necessary to render it fruitful. "What I am doing," says Emerson, "may not be the most important thing in the world ; but I must deem it to be so, or I shall not do it with impunity."

The physical and mental insularity of England were natural obstacles to her receipt of the humanistic impulse which was transforming Italy. When, nevertheless, we consider Chaucer's visits to Italy in the preceding century, his vast obligations to Boccaccio, and the manifest influence of Petrarch and even Dante upon his writings, we cannot but feel surprise at the fewness and slightness of traces of Italy in England until far on in the fifteenth century. The national character and capacity had assuredly sunk to a lower level. In some measure, as already observed, this may be due to the discouragement of Bible reading and religious inquiry in general ; but this, if partly a cause, was also in a great degree an effect. It may not be an unreasonable



Henry V.

*After the portrait in the National Portrait Gallery*

conjecture that the Black Death of the middle of the fourteenth century, sparing neither youth nor age, had extinguished the most gifted minds in infancy, and prevented others from coming into being. Certain it is that, during the first half of the fifteenth century, everything in England outside the royal family is mediocrity. Henry V. is a great and heroic figure, but the ideal of a mediæval sovereign rather than of one of his own day. His brother Bedford, who would have made an excellent king, was doomed to waste his powers in a dreary and hopeless contest with France.

*Paucity of  
men of genius*

The third brother, Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, neither able nor exemplary nor fortunate in public affairs, nevertheless claims distinction as

*Humphrey,  
Duke of  
Gloucester*

the patron of art and letters, as the stay of the fallen and impoverished University of Oxford, and as the one man who saw what Italian culture could effect for England. He did everything in his power to bring the two countries into literary connection, inviting Italians over to instruct Englishmen in classical learning, and corresponding with the more distinguished scholars who could not be induced to leave their own country. He gave Leonardo Bruni the impulse to his translation of Aristotle's *Politics*, and, at the suggestion of the Archbishop of Milan, enabled Pier Candido Decembrio to complete the translation of Plato's *Republic*, and accepted the dedication of the work. He had been partly educated at Balliol College, and patriotically came to the rescue of Oxford, then in a lamentable condition, generally ascribed to the foreign wars, but which it is difficult to avoid connecting with the violent suppression of freedom of thought and by consequence of freedom of study in Wycliffe's day. Emulating Richard de Bury,



Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester

From the "*Catalogus Librorum Manuscriptorum Angliæ et Hiberniæ*," 1697

Bishop of Durham, and author of the *Philobiblon*, who in the preceding century had founded a library at Oxford, he gave so many books that the University had to build a special repository for them, to which he contributed, and he would have anticipated the fame of Sir Thomas Bodley but for the scandalous plundering of his library under Edward VI. His patronage of letters, apart from his direct connection with translation and his munificence to Oxford, is thus described by Bishop Creighton :

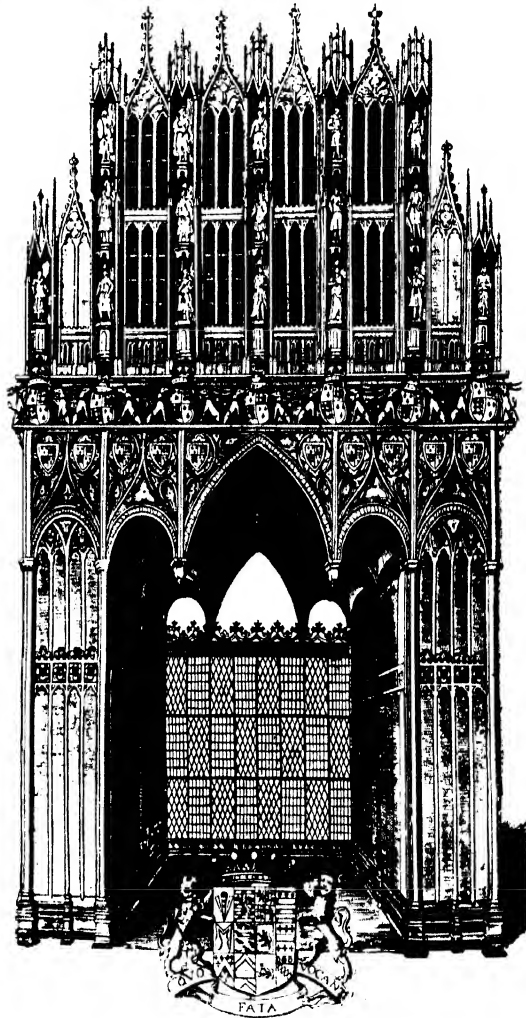
"He encouraged the writings of such treatises as the age enjoyed, discussions of questions of no particular meaning for the sake of gathering round them a certain amount of recondite knowledge, of exercising dialectical skill and exhibiting the beauty of a classical style. The subjects resemble those which virtuous schoolboys might presumably choose if they were left to select topics for essays, *e.g.*, the difference between virtues and vices, or a comparison of the life of a student with that of a warrior. Besides receiving such compositions from others Humphrey was himself a letter-writer, and sent presents of books to other princes, with appropriate remarks on the fitness of the work for the character of its recipient. Further, he welcomed to England an unknown Italian, who took the high-sounding name of Titus Livius, and constituted himself the biographer of Henry V. Nor did Humphrey neglect English writers ; he befriended Pecock, Capgrave, and Lydgate.

I do not see that he omitted anything which became one who formed himself on the best Italian model."

The Duke also formed around himself a small circle of English humanists, the most remarkable of whom was Bekynton, Bishop of Bath and Wells, and celebrated as one of the chief benefactors to his cathedral and to the city.

The seed sown by Gloucester bore fruit, not in any direct addition to English literature, but in the awakening of humanistic interests among men of intellectual promise in the succeeding generation. Among these were a bishop and an earl, both leading statesmen in their day. William Grey, afterwards Bishop of Ely and Lord High Treasurer, proceeded to Italy about 1442, and remained at least twelve years in the country, studying under the celebrated Guarinus at Ferrara, and, as his ample means allowed, causing manuscripts to be copied in the most elegant calligraphic style for transportation to England. The beautiful illumination of these books invited plunder and mutilation in the sixteenth century; upwards of a hundred and fifty of Grey's manuscripts, nevertheless, remain at Balliol College. As a pioneer, he attracted to Italy

*English  
humanists  
in Italy*



**Tomb of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester**

*From Sandford's "Genealogical History," 1707*

other Oxford men, Robert Fleming, Dean of Lincoln, John Free, John Gunthorp, afterwards Dean of Wells; above all, John Tiptoft, Earl of Worcester, a perfect image of the Italian despot of those days for the combination of lettered tastes with ruthless cruelty, which brought him to the scaffold. The English students gained the esteem and admiration of their Italian preceptors; most of the ecclesiastics among them owed their promotion to the Popes; and Ludovicus Carbo, in his funeral oration on Guarinus, enumerates it among his master's merits to have attracted so many

Englishmen; and says of Tiptoft in particular that he has despoiled the Italian libraries of manuscripts, and sought to bereave Italy of a yet more precious treasure in the orator himself, whom he has invited to England, "and I certainly will go if you people of Ferrara do not make as much of me as you ought." Here, perhaps, we find the rudiments of "the grand tour," so necessary an item in the higher class English education of the eighteenth century.

*Some books  
and writers  
of mark*

The pilgrims to the land of culture were in one point of view the most



**John Tiptoft, Earl of Worcester, and his two wives**

*From the monument in Ely Cathedral*

interesting men of their prosaic age, and perhaps, together no doubt with some like-minded whose names have not reached us, almost the only ones who possessed an intellectual ideal. They made, however, no addition to English literature, whose utter barrenness was meanwhile being diversified by two very dissimilar kinds of people, an old knight broken in the wars; and a bevy of knights, dames, squires, stewards and retainers who wrote industriously upon their private affairs without any notion that they were contributing to their country's literature. The Paston Letters, nevertheless, afford a view of mediæval domestic life which has never been preserved anywhere but in our England; and in Sir THOMAS MALORY England found such

a prose writer as she had never known till then. Before coming to these signal performances it will be desirable to eliminate the three other authors, all men of mark apart from their books, who contributed to prevent the entire extinction of literature. None wrote with a literary purpose, but each did something which would have gained him credit even in a lettered age. They are Bishop REGINALD PECOCK, JOHN CAPGRAVE, and Sir JOHN FORTESCUE. Pecock is the only conspicuous theologian of his epoch, Capgrave its only vernacular historian, Fortescue its sole jurist. Poetry, except for an occasional song or ballad or a metrical version of a religious legend, may be pronounced extinct south of the Tweed, unless *The Flower and the*

*Leaf* is a work of this age. Imaginative literature of any kind would appear equally lifeless but for the great name of Malory. The extant miracle plays, indeed, mostly belong to the fifteenth century, but even this is a token of the prevalent utilitarianism. They needed to be purveyed, or they would not have been written at all. This utilitarian spirit, nevertheless, is not peculiar to England, but is a note of the whole contemporary literature of Europe, except, perhaps, Scotland. Scarcely anything was published anywhere without reference to some material end, a definition which comprehends divinity and the study of the classics. And, until the invention of printing came to stimulate authorship by rendering publication so much easier, very little was published at all. Yet, as the Paston Letters are about to show us, general education of the kind requisite for the transaction of the ordinary affairs of life stood at a high level : and public documents were composed with an attention to cogency and elegance previously unknown.

**Reginald Pecock** (1394-1460), a Welshman by birth, and successively Bishop of St. Asaph and Chichester, is remarkable for his misfortunes, and as the only English prelate of his period, or indeed for long before or afterwards, who betrayed the slightest propensity to knowing more than was good for him. Unquestionably his example was little calculated to encourage similar aberrations among his brethren. His history bears a singular resemblance to Bishop Colenso's. Colenso was led to modify his theological opinions through the reflections forced upon his mind as he endeavoured to convert a Zulu. Pecock fell into what the other bishops thought heresy through his attempts to reclaim the Lollards. He did not, indeed, become a Lollard any more than Colenso became a Zulu ; but he was led to rationalise upon the grounds of moral obligation in a manner agreeable to the nearly unanimous opinion of philosophers, but exceedingly distasteful to the divines of his age. He disparaged or at least minimised the authority of the Church in comparison with that of Scripture, and criticised sundry clauses in the Apostles' Creed. The result was a prosecution for heresy, entailing his recantation, his resignation of his see, and imprisonment for life in Thorney Abbey, soon terminated by his death. He probably had no intention of favouring heresy, but the bent of his mind was evident to his episcopal colleagues. It was rather his habitual cast of thought than any specific heresy that aroused their hostility ; and their action is not really touched by Professor Babington's demonstration that in condemning Pecock they were by anticipation condemning the Council of Trent.

*Bishop  
Reginald  
Pecock*

Pecock wrote much, both in Latin and English, but his works have in general been destroyed by his adversaries. The most important of those remaining is his *Repressor of over much Blaming of the Clergy*, composed before his orthodoxy had become suspected. It is in great part a defence of the adoration of relics, pictures, and images, which had evidently become a scandal to many not otherwise disposed to question the doctrines of the Church. The treatment is strictly logical and scholastic ; the author continually lays down some proposition, and proceeds to demonstrate it by arguments thrown into the form of syllogisms, leaving, in his own opinion, no loophole for the adversary's escape, and making his work a very Euclid of theological science. The arguments of the Lollards also are presented with sufficient fairness,



Capgrave presenting his Book on Genesis to Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester

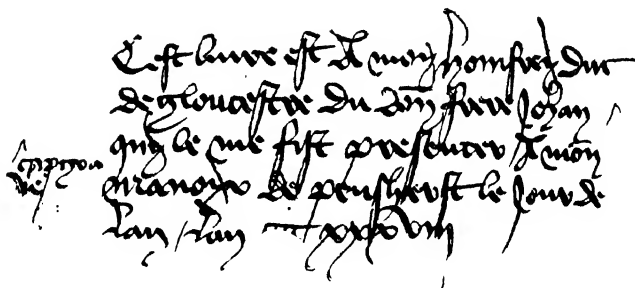
From the MS. in Oriel College, Oxford



though, as is inevitable, only set up like ninepins to be bowled down again. The generally candid and temperate tone of argument is highly to the writer's honour, and probably helped to convince the other bishops that he was by no means the man for them or for his age. After having made the best defence for images possible, he concludes by an emphatic statement that such aids to devotion are, after all, no more in comparison with Scripture itself than moonlight to sunlight.

Pecock's peculiar method of treating his subject exerted much influence upon his style and vocabulary. He aims at transferring the style of argumentation familiar to the defenders and oppugners of theses at the universities to a popular treatise, for such his *Repression* is designed to be. He consequently had, in Professor Saintsbury's words, "to adapt the vernacular to the strictly accurate thought and precise terminology required by scholastic habits." Hence he is a great neologist, constantly introducing novelties to get closer to the ideal he has ever in his mind. As no one else ever imitated scholastic precedents with such servility his style is unique. It conveys the impression of one thinking in Latin as he speaks in English. The effect is quaint, but not unpleasing. One of his most marked peculiarities is his constant employment of tripleted phrases, using three nearly synonymous words where one would have sufficed. The following is a fair specimen of Pecock's pedantic yet racy method of argument :

If I, being at London in the College of Whittington, bid or counsel, or witness to my servant there being with me that he go to Paul's Cross for to hear there attentively a sermon to be preached, it must needs be granted that I in so bidding, counselling or witnessing, bid, counsel, or witness that he learn or remember somewhat by the same sermon, and that some manner of new disposition, less or more, he take into his affection of something of this sermon. Forwhy all this followeth out of the attentive hearing of the sermon. Also it must needs be granted that I, in bidding, counselling, or witnessing, bid, counsel, or witness that he go forth out of the College gate. Forwhy, unless he go forth from me at the gate, he may not come to Paul's Cross for to hear the sermon. Also, sithen from the said College be many ways to Paul's Cross, and of which each is speedful and good enough for to lead to Paul's Cross, it must needs be granted that in



Inscription from Capgrave's Book on Genesis, stating that the book belonged to Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester

so bidding, counselling, or witnessing, I witness that, which ever of these ways he takes, I it allow ; and if cause be found in any of the ways that by doom of reason this way ought to be left (as if peradventure in one of these ways a man lieth in wait for to slay my said servant) certes this way is not, as for then, one of the speedful ways for him into Paul's Cross. And also it must be granted that in so bidding, counselling, or witnessing, I will and allow that he go and choose the better of the ways than the less good of

the ways, and that he in better manner hear the sermon than that he in less good manner hear the same sermon.

Thomas  
Gascoigne

Pecock had a bitter adversary in THOMAS GASCOIGNE (1403-1458), twice Chancellor of the University of Oxford. Gascoigne wrote in Latin, but the

passages of contemporary history and biography excerpted by Professor Thorold Rogers from his Theological Dictionary deserve a word of notice from the light they cast upon the general corruption of the times. They are also important as testifying to the resentment against Rome entertained by Churchmen of unimpeachable and even fanatical orthodoxy. His comments upon individuals must be received with reserve; and his entire tone is not uncoloured by the circumstance, barely credible, he deems, save by Omniscience, that "Ego Thomas Gascoigne, Anglicus nativitate, nunquam habui mihi oblatam aliquam præbendam in aliqua ecclesia Angliæ XII. marcarum!"

John Capgrave

(1393-1464), born at Lynn Regis, was an Augustinian friar, and

*his modur capitulu teron*

**O**f yis mater spekyng yis gyltyn man  
in ye 11 booke of his confessiounes wher  
he seith of his fader yat he was of na-  
ture ful frendly and goodly and redy eke on  
to me as many men be kynde and fre of hert  
and sone meued to malencolie this holi wo-  
man weddis on to hym whan sche had aspyed  
his hasty condicion sche had pethy godhous  
in hir dedis and pethy modernoon in hir lye  
dis yat he coude neuyn catch no hold to be-  
broth woth hir in all his lyf sche wold if he  
excedid as augustinus tellith abide til his d  
were goo yin wold sche reherse on to hym  
ye end a byed wordes wher he had spoke  
or ye onresonable werke wher he had do  
Smytyme it hapned yat sche sat a mong oyr  
matrones of hir knowlech of wherch womne  
fime had merke in her face wherch her hus-  
bandis had mad only for ye wold speke a  
geyn whan her husbandis wold wroth and  
yan wold yese womne say on to moncha we  
haue grete wondir of ye and ym husfand  
yat you bruggist neuyn no merke of his sin  
fys we non of us haue herd yat enyr yer  
was oyr stuf be thyng you too not withstand  
yat he is an roue man and hasty as oyr  
sibbeling among us sche wold answer on  
to hem on yis maner off ze haue of zour  
tables matrimonial yat wer mad be thyng  
you and zour husfandis at zour weddyng

John  
Capgrave

Page from Capgrave's "Life of St. Gilbert"

British Museum MS 36,704

rose to be provincial of his order. Except for his university education, whether at Oxford or Cambridge is uncertain, and a visit to Rome, he appears to have spent nearly all his life in the Augustinian convent at Lynn. He enjoyed a great reputation among his contemporaries for learning and eloquence, and his works were numerous. The great majority, however, are written in Latin and treat of theology and scholastic philosophy, and his most important performance, *The Lives of Illustrious Henries*, is

also is Latin. His claim to a place among English writers, apart from a metrical life of St. Katherine, and some fragments of a guide to Rome, has hitherto rested solely upon his abridged *Chronicle of England*, from the Creation to 1417, but will soon be extended by the publication of a life of Saint Gilbert of Sempringham, supposed to be lost, but discovered by Dr. G. F. Warner, of the British Museum, and about to be edited by Sir E. M. Thompson for the Roxburghe Club. The early portion of the *Chronicle* relates chiefly to ecclesiastical affairs and to incidents of general history, and it is only when he approaches his own times that much can be learned from him respecting England. He is a strong partisan of the Lancastrian kings, not so much, apparently, from adulation, as from sympathy with their persecution of the Lollards, whom he holds in abhorrence. On the whole, the work is but little above the general level of monastic chronicles. His account of the battle of Agincourt, nevertheless, may be cited as a pattern of brevity and modesty, and a fair specimen of the English of the period:

So on the twenty-fourth day of October the hosts met not a mile asunder. The king comforted greatly his men that they should trust in God, for that their cause was rightful. The French part stood on the hill, and we in the vale. Betwixt them was a land new-harrowed, where was evil footing. Short for to say, the field fell unto the King, and the French party lost it, for all their number and their pride.

There were dead the Duke of Lauson, the Duke of Braban, the Duke of Baves, five earls; the Constable eke of France, and a hundred lords; knights and squires four thousand, sixty, and nine; the common people were not numbered. In the time of the battle the brigands on the French side took the King's carriage and led it away, in which they found the King's crown. They made the bells to ring and men for to sing, "Te Deum laudamus," telling verily that the King was dead. But within a few hours after their joy was changed. The King rode to Calais and over the sea to Dover, and in the twenty-third day of November came to London, and there was received in the best manner.

**Sir John Fortescue**, eminent as an author, is yet more so as one of the Chief



Sir John Fortescue

From "*Fortescutus Illustratus*," 1663

*Sir John  
Fortescue*

Justices who, like Gascoigne and Sir Matthew Hale, have in troubled times vindicated a reputation for impartiality. As a politician he was active on the wrong or at least the unfortunate side ; as a magistrate he enjoyed universal esteem. He was born towards the close of the fourteenth century, and belonged to the eminent Devonshire family which has produced so many men of mark. After practising as serjeant-at-law, and holding a puisne judgeship, he became Chief Justice of the King's Bench in 1442. During the Wars of the Roses he adhered with a constancy unusual in that fickle age to the House of Lancaster, whose title he vindicated in several treatises. Deprived of his office and attainted by the victorious party, he took refuge successively in Scotland and in Flanders, where he suffered great hardships. He was largely instrumental in bringing about the revolution which temporarily de throne d Edward IV. in 1470, but when the Lancastrian party was crushed and his pupil, Prince Edward, slain in the battle of Tewkesbury, where he himself was made prisoner, the octogenarian made his peace with the victors and condescended to refute his own arguments on the succession. This, under the circumstances, can hardly be regarded as a blot upon his fame. He retired to Ebrington, in Devonshire, and died there at the age of ninety, as is said.

Fortescue's principal English work, *The Governance of England*, is a very short one, but so full of matter as to have afforded his editor, Mr. Plummer, material for a thick volume, of which no word is superfluous. Mr. Plummer's introduction on the state of the law in Fortescue's time, and the remedies which he proposes for the anarchy occasioned by the incapacity of Henry VI., is especially valuable. Fortescue's claim to remembrance is as a lawyer and a statesman, not as man of letters, yet his style is terse and emphatic. His best known work, *De Laudibus Legum Angliæ*, written in 1470 for the instruction of Prince Edward, was originally composed in Latin, though frequently translated. *The Governance of England* was first published in 1714. Though it is a work of great merit, the standard position which it seems likely to retain in English literature will be mainly due to the exhaustive commentary of Mr. Plummer. Perhaps no passage is so well known as the demonstration that an Englishman is more valiant than a Frenchman, inasmuch as he is the stouter thief :

It hath been oftentimes seen in England that three or four thieves for poverty have set upon six or seven true men, and robbed them all. But it hath not been seen in France that six or seven thieves have been hardy to rob three or four men. Wherefore it is right seldom that Frenchmen be hanged for robbery, for they have no hearts to do so terrible an act. There be therefore more men hanged in England in a year for robbery and manslaughter than there be hanged in France for such manner of crime in seven years. There is no man hanged in Scotland for seven years together for robbery ; and yet they be oftentimes hanged for larceny, and the stealing of goods in the absence of the owners thereof. But their hearts serve them not to take a man's goods while he is present and will defend it ; which manner of taking is called robbery. But the Englishman is of another courage. For if he be poor, and see another man having riches, which may be taken from him by might, he will not spare to do so, but if that poor man be right true. Wherefore it is not poverty, but it is lack of heart and cowardice that keepeth the Frenchman from rising.

*The Paston  
Letters*

While, notwithstanding, the fruits of authorship were thus scanty and insipid, private pens, wielded without the remotest literary purpose, were being exerted in a manner destined to create little by little a monument paralleled in no other country. No other nation has anything to vie with *The Paston Letters*.

Whereby man in the lunde of this land some late to the same said  
John firstest in this wise And while is more in Scotlande  
With Henry fourth of this land in dede thought he were put so in  
highe Therefore made this manny writinge And sent hidn by which  
was fallen among the people of grete rage And answere to  
this whiche the kinge once for aigne lord And the in harty And  
thus hadde to reigne upon us And truly for the amendinge And  
endurynge of this writinge have be ascribed to you in the oppresson  
of the people considerynge that we were the chiefest somelless to y<sup>e</sup> sa  
id late kinge for whiche cause hit is thought to many right wyse  
men And also to me and other of your frendes that it is noble your  
Duties And also we both bounde in conscience to declare your selfe frey  
And also the qualites and effectes of all such writinge as we were  
thus prynced into such wyse as they tyme not hereafter to y<sup>e</sup> kinges hand  
And that we do this by writinge such as may come to the knowlache  
of the people also clerely as dyde the said writinge sent into offscote  
lunde of which many yete remaynyn in the hand of of still doyll  
dysposse people that pryncely redome and redeu theym to the kinge  
deshonour And in flammour of his said alle wherunto firstest in y<sup>e</sup>  
forme thus soloth

In verry good and con frende I thanke you hartely of yo fidele &  
faythfull comrall whiche I shall folowe also serue as shalbe possible  
to me for I doubt not but it is reason I do as ye move me But yet  
it is so that I have many such verrynges made in Scotlande of whiche  
sum were made by other men than by me wherunto I was not pry-  
ve But yet I bringe of them into this land said they were of  
my makinge verrynges thereby that they shoulde be the more fa-  
voured & there were also of verrynges made thereby I said late tyme  
comrall and put hym to whiche I was not well willinge to

They are a perfect exhibition how life went on throughout the greater part of the fifteenth century in an English family of condition living in a state of constant warfare with grasping neighbours, not the less deadly for being mainly waged upon paper and parchment. As this state of affairs resulted in great measure from the dislocation of society in times of civil strife, the correspondence affords indirectly a valuable picture of the fallen condition of the country under Henry VI. and during the Wars of the Roses; while, nevertheless, the fermentation of the new is as visible as the decay of the old. Feudalism is passing away, and we assist at the birth-throes of the modern State. The letters which portray this striking scene are in general written by persons of good education for their times, but of no enlargement of mind, or any conception that they are making and recording history. They are in general the members of the Paston family in Norfolk, their lawyers, stewards, retainers, and other persons brought into connection with them. The letters are in the main on business, though domestic news and expressions of affection or the reverse are not wanting. Their unexpected recovery near the close of the eighteenth century may be compared to that equally unexpected recovery of papyri which has of late thrown such light on the social condition of Egypt under the Ptolemies and the Romans. The effect in both instances resembles the sudden opening of a window in a dead wal

Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely a letter from Margaret Paston. The text is written on a single sheet of paper, with some lines crossed out and others written in a different hand. The script is dense and difficult to read, but it appears to be a personal letter, possibly discussing family matters or business. The text is written in a cursive script, likely a letter from Margaret Paston. The text is written on a single sheet of paper, with some lines crossed out and others written in a different hand. The script is dense and difficult to read, but it appears to be a personal letter, possibly discussing family matters or business. The text is written in a cursive script, likely a letter from Margaret Paston. The text is written on a single sheet of paper, with some lines crossed out and others written in a different hand. The script is dense and difficult to read, but it appears to be a personal letter, possibly discussing family matters or business.

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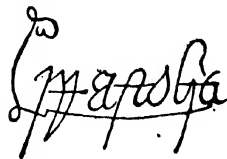
Letter from Margaret Paston

British Museum MS. 27,445

The papyri, however, from their brevity and their mutilated condition, afford mere glimpses in comparison with the flood of light which the Paston correspondence pours upon the circumstances of the time.

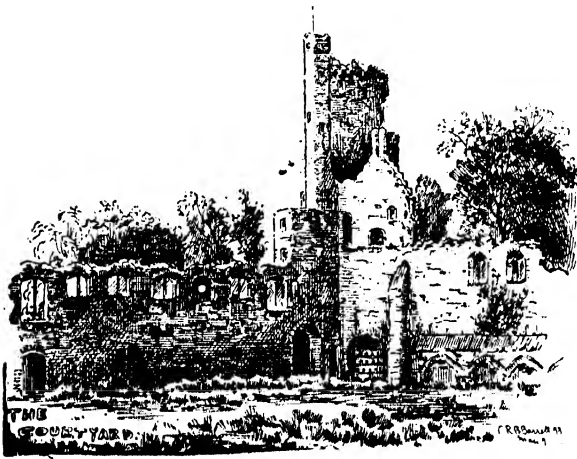
The Paston family, who derived their name from the village of Paston, four miles from North Walsham in Norfolk, rose into notice at the beginning of the fifteenth century in the person of William Paston, justice of the common pleas. His father, Clement Paston, was a simple husbandman, and the enemies of the family endeavoured to make him out a serf; but the Pastons stoutly maintained their descent from a follower of William the Conqueror, and it would be unseemly to cavil at the evidence which satisfied King Edward IV. If of gentle blood, they were undoubtedly reduced in circumstances, and William Paston owed his prosperity and station in the world to his proficiency as a lawyer, combined, as would appear, with an amiable disposition and a high character for integrity. His life was not devoid of stirring incidents, but the interest of the Paston family history begins with his son, John Paston, less on account of any peculiarity in the character of this personage, an average country gentleman of his day, shrewd, clear-headed, and exempt from sentimental weaknesses, than from the extraordinary tangle of disputes in which he was engaged and the aggressions which he had to resist, all symptomatic of a disorganised condition of society. The mushroom prosperity of the Pastons had evidently excited ill will, and enemies arose on every side to despoil them. Lord de Moleyns, apparently without a shadow of right, seized and kept by force a manor lawfully acquired by the Pastons from Thomas Chaucer, the reputed son of the poet. Paston was obliged to spend much of his time in London, making interest at Court for the confusion of De Moleyns and other depredators, sometimes making acquaintance with the interior of the Fleet. Two persons with whom he had much connection shine forth as striking characters. One is his wife, Margaret Paston, a model of domestic affection, housewifely diligence, and prudent management of all family business, her husband's representative during his absence from home, and able to cope with any perplexity or adversity. The other, Paston's neighbour and patron, and the chief factor in the prosperity to which the family ultimately attained, is a much more celebrated personage, no other than the veteran warrior, Sir John Fastolf, whose victories and defeats in the French wars are now but as dust in the balance in comparison with his supposed identification with Sir John Falstaff. That Shakespeare took the name of Falstaff from Fastolf seems certain, and some local particulars respecting Southwark, a haunt of Fastolf's, appear to imply that the identification may have gone somewhat farther. It was also Fastolf's misfortune to have been once, very unjustly as it would seem, charged with cowardice; and Shakespeare, in search of a comic trait, availed himself of the hint, taking advantage of the groundless aspersion and the corollaries naturally deducible from it to create the most comic of comic personages. Nothing, apparently

*The Paston  
family history*



Autograph of Sir John Fastolf

could in reality less resemble Falstaff than his alleged prototype. "He had," says Mr. Gairdner, "been abroad with Henry V. at Agincourt and at the Siege of Rouen. He had afterwards served in France under the Regent Bedford, had taken several strong castles and one illustrious prisoner, had held the government of conquered districts, and had fought, generally with success and glory, in almost every great battle of the period." He was also a knight of the garter and a privy councillor. There were, indeed, serious deviations from the ideal which distinctions so honourable might seem to involve, but these were quite of another kind than the shortcomings of the theatrical Falstaff. "From the general tenor," says Mr. Gairdner, "of most of his



Caister Castle

*From a drawing by C. R. B. Barrett*

letters we should certainly no more suspect him of being the old soldier that he actually was than of being Shakespeare's fat disorderly knight. Every sentence in them refers to lawsuits and title-deeds, extortions and injuries received from others, forged processes affecting property, writs of one kind or another to be issued against his adversaries, libels uttered

against himself, and matters of the like description. Altogether the perusal is apt to give us an impression that Sir John would have made an acute and able, though perhaps not very high-minded, solicitor." Decidedly Fastolf bears less resemblance to Falstaff than to another famous creation of the comic stage.<sup>1</sup>

*The Paston  
family affairs*

Fastolf was neither amiable nor popular, but his hardness and selfishness were in some measure redeemed by an aspiring purpose, which recalls Warren Hastings's ambition to recover the patrimonial estate at Daylesford. He would build a splendid castle at Caister, the place of his birth, and connect it with a pious foundation for his soul's health. The castle was built, and a noble tower, ninety feet high, and foundations covering six acres, remain to attest its magnificence. During the last five years of his life Fastolf inhabited

<sup>1</sup> *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac*. Oui : mais, quand il y aurait information, ajournement, décret et jugement obtenu par surprise, défaut et contumace, j'ai la voie de conflit de juridiction pour temporiser et venir aux moyens de nullité qui seront dans les procédures.

*Sbrigani*. L'on voit bien, monsieur, que vous êtes du métier.

*Monsieur de Pourceaugnac*. Moi ! point du tout. Je suis gentilhomme.

*Sbrigani*. Il faut bien, pour parler ainsi, que vous ayez étudié la pratique.

*Monsieur de Pourceaugnac*. Ce sont quelques mots que j'ai retenus en lisant les romans.



it, and all this time the influence of his neighbour and cousin Paston, aided by a friend at court, the knight's confessor, Friar Brackley, grew and grew until upon the old warrior's decease in 1459, Paston was found heir to all his lands in Norfolk and Suffolk, subject to a payment of four thousand marks and the obligation of establishing in Caister Castle a college of monks and poor men to pray for the souls of Fastolf and his family. For some years following the history of the Paston family is highly dramatic. Everybody fell upon the upstarts. The Duke of Norfolk seized Caister Castle. The will was contested, and Paston, unjustly in all likelihood, was accused of forging it. Fastolf's disposition was not, in fact, unreasonable. He had no near relatives, and it was but natural that he should entrust the care of his earthly monument and his spiritual weal to an able and approved friend. Paston, nevertheless, was three times imprisoned in the Fleet, and although he recovered Caister, bequeathed at his death in 1466 a succession beset by harassing lawsuits. His son, an amiable man, but indolent and careless, left the family affairs chiefly in the hands of his exemplary mother and his younger brother, spending much of his time upon the Continent. For a time the family was in the greatest jeopardy from their espousal of the cause of Henry VI. during the brief revolution which ended on the field of Tewkesbury. Matters were at length arranged, and the Pastons remained in possession of the greater part of Sir John Fastolf's estates, including Caister Castle; but the benefaction for the intended college was transferred to Magdalen College, Oxford, a foundation of Bishop Waynflete, one of Fastolf's executors. With the death of Sir John Paston in 1479 the liveliness, copiousness, and historical value of the correspondence cease, though it straggles down to 1509.

There is no such testimony anywhere to the social condition of England, ere records had been multiplied by the art of printing, as is afforded by the Paston correspondence; and the constant encounter with interesting and graphic particulars renders it most attractive reading. Of strictly literary merit the letters have little; yet the clearness and propriety with which the writers, belonging to diverse ranks and orders of society, manage in general to convey their meaning, show that the education of the day was really good and thorough as far as it went. They are in harmony with the literary tendencies of their time in being entirely utilitarian. Nothing else, it may be said, could be expected from family letters written on matters of business, but the writers make us feel that their interests are limited to the ordinary affairs of life. Save for one book-bill, there is no hint of the existence of such a thing as literature; no vestige of admiration for natural beauty; stirring events are narrated with cold formality; the dramatic vicissitudes of the day awaken no emotion of loyalty; and of patriotism there is not a trace. Society, left to itself, would be entirely anarchical; fortunately, the need for some judicial system is recognised in theory; and even when the central authority is in abeyance the gradual softening of manners indisposes to open violence, and inclines men to avail themselves of the quirks and quilllets of the law. Nothing seems more remarkable than the general acquaintance of the laity with legal phraseology and

*Character-  
istics of the  
Paston corre-  
spondence*

technicalities ; men have not yet reached the stage when their rights are safe from lawless encroachment, but they are in a stage of development when these can be successfully defended by pen and ink. The general sordidness of the picture is in some measure relieved by the vigorous portraiture of the leading personages : the elder Sir John Paston, shrewd and hard ; his gay and careless successor, intent on horse and hound ; the grim veteran Fastolf, slowly sinking like a battered ship, but with colours flying to the last ; Dame



Lancelot at a Tournament

*From the French Romance of Lancelot du Lac, 1513*

Margaret Paston, a thoroughly lovable person, with her wifely duty to her husband, and a solicitude for her son's interests which lends force to her frequent chidings. The following portion of one of her letters will show that the English gentry of the fifteenth century could express themselves on paper with no inconsiderable vigour :

I would ye should purvey for yourself as hastily as ye may. and come home and take heed to your own and to mine, thereto, otherwise than ye have done before this, both for my profit and for yours,

or else I shall purvey for myself otherwise in haste, so that I trust shall be more ease and avail for me and none ease nor profit to you in time to come. I have little help nor comfort of you yet, God give me grace to have more hereafter. I would ye should assay whether it be more profitable for you to serve me than for to serve such masters as ye have served afore this ; and, that ye find more profitable thereafter, do in time to come. Ye have assayed the world reasonably, ye shall know yourself better hereafter. I pray God we may be in quiet and in rest with our own from henceforth. My power is not so good as I would it were for your sake and other ; and if it were, we should not long be in danger. God bring us out of it, who have you in his keeping. Written with unheartsease the Monday next after Relic Sunday,

By your Mother.

*Discovery and  
re-discovery of  
the letters*

The Paston family continued to flourish until the days of Charles II., when its representative was raised to the peerage as Earl of Yarmouth. This was the term of its prosperity, the second earl dissipated the property, and the family became extinct at his death. He had previously sold the treasured family correspondence to the antiquary Le Neve. After passing through various hands it came to another antiquary, John Fenn, who published two volumes of extracts in 1787, and, in acknowledgment of the honour of knighthood thus earned, presented the originals to George III. These originals, as well as those of volumes subsequently published, mysteriously



**T**here foloweth the fyrth  
boke of the noble and wor-  
thy prynce kyng Arthur.

**H**ow syr Launcelot and syr Lvonell  
departed fro the courte for to seke auen-  
tures / & how syr Lvonell lefte syr Lau-  
celot slepyng & was taken. Capl. i.



None after that the  
noble & worthy kyng  
Arthur was comen  
fro Rome in to Eng-  
lande / all the knygh-  
tes of the roude table  
resorted vnto þe kyng  
and made many iustes and turneymen-  
tes / & some there were that were good

knyghtes / whiche encreased so in ar-  
mes and worshyp that they passed all  
they felowes in prowesse & noble dedes  
& that was well proued on many. But  
in espyrall it was proued on syr Laun-  
celot du lake. For in all turneymentes  
and iustes and dedes of armes / bothe  
for lyfe and deth he passed all knyghtes  
& at no tyme he was neuer ouercomen  
but yf it were by treason or enchaunte-  
ment. Syr Launcelot encreased so mer-  
uaylously in worshyp & honour / wher-  
fore he is the first knyght þe frenche  
booke maketh mencyon of / after that  
kyng Arthur came from Rome / wher  
fore quene Gueneuer had hym in grete  
fauour aboue all other knyghtes / and  
certaynly he loued the quene agayne as  
boue all other ladyes and damoyelles  
all the dayes of his lyfe / and for hert he

i ii

disappeared, and it is not surprising that Herman Merivale should have questioned the genuineness of the correspondence. It was vindicated by Mr. James Gairdner, and ere long the soundness of his judgment was proved by the retrieval of all the missing portions, with many additional letters, from the old country mansions where they had been hidden away. The entire collection is now accessible in Mr. Gairdner's elegant and convenient edition (1900).

Malory's  
"Morte  
d'Arthur"

While the writers of the Paston letters were at their busiest, the other work which preserves the middle of the fifteenth century from absolute barrenness was employing the pen of a knight, probably a soldier. *Le Morte d'Arthur* of SIR THOMAS MALORY would have been a brilliant star in any century, and almost monopolises the starless literary heaven of the fifteenth. Yet it is no original work, but in the main a translation, and cannot be contemplated apart from the general movement of which it is a portion. Schiller's saying that what would live in song must die on earth, is fully exemplified in the chivalric revival of this age. It was purely literary, sentimental, romantic, and idealistic. Chivalry as a tangible institution, apart from the chivalric emotions which will never forsake the human breast, was dead and gone beyond recall. But its beautiful traits, seen backwards through a long vista of years, and touched with the charm which remoteness ever imparts, aroused the enthusiasm of men who had little faith in giants and enchanters, and had no idea of disusing gunpowder. It was instinctively felt that the chivalric ideal afforded a model which, though incapable of being followed implicitly, might be highly serviceable in promoting the growth of civility, and restraining the rudeness of which the finer minds were becoming ashamed. The notion naturally took the deepest root in courtly circles, to which men of letters, when not priests or professors, commonly belonged or attached themselves. This was very necessary, since, from changes of language and ideas, the old books of chivalry had become obsolete, and needed to be replaced by others in accordance with the spirit of the age. France set to work in prose, Italy in verse, and the genius of a single man whose work narrowly escaped destruction provided England with a representation of the ideal chivalric life so complete within the limits of a single book that nothing needed to be added to it.

Malory's sub-  
ject and style

Malory's forte was not invention, at the same time he was more than a translator. He combined detached romances into a congruous whole, and though he did not actually create any character, the personages of the old stories which he handled almost appear new in the glow of his ardent feeling. The subjects which he selected, as the title of his works imports, belong entirely to the Arthurian cycle of romance. In this he followed the French romancers, whose subjects had been largely borrowed from Brittany, the Wales of France. "The most admirable fables of King Arthur," says Dante, speaking of the French literature of his day. An adequate idea of the effect produced upon the old Arthurian legends of Wales by transplantation to French soil may be obtained by a comparison of the two strata of fiction, pure Welsh and Welsh Normanised, which compose the Mabinogion. In the former we have the

genuine Celtic spirit, quaint and crude, but intensely poetical; in the latter we have this in alliance with the spirit of mediæval chivalry, decked with new splendour and preserving much of the Celtic scenery and manners, yet at one remove from the original fount which burst forth in Wales, and, like the Arethusa of classic legend, flowed under the sea to break out again in Brittany. The style of Malory's romance so greatly resembles the Normanised Welsh fiction of the latter portions of the *Mabinogion*, of which the Geraint story upon which Tennyson has founded two of the *Idylls of the King* is a characteristic example, that he might well have been one of the writers. The return of Cambrian fiction to Wales in a Norman dress is like the return of the olive-bearing dove to the Ark.

The Arthurian was but one of two great cycles of romance revived in the fifteenth century to become important factors in the literature of the age. What Arthur was to Britain, Charlemagne was to Italy and in some measure to France also. Malory betrays no acquaintance with the great Emperor, but a French romance upon him is among the publications of Caxton. It is characteristic of the difference between the nations that while the first

**If it plesy ony man spirytuel or temporel to bye ony  
pyes of two and thre comemoracions of salisbury vñe  
enpryntid after the forme of this prelet lettre whiche  
ben wel and truly correct, late hym come to westmo-  
nester in to the almonesshye at the reed pale and he that  
haue them good chepe .v.v.**

### **Supplicatio scet cedula**

Caxton's Advertisement at Westminster

*Bodleian Library*

important Italian poem on the Charlemagne legend, the *Morgante Maggiore* of Pulci, is rather comic than serious, and a vein of polite raillery traverses even the *Orlando Innamorato* of Boiardo, Malory, though not averse to the introduction of a humorous character or scene, writes with an air of profoundest belief. Knowing so little of his personality as we do, we are at liberty to conceive of him as an English Quixote, fed upon antique romance until he burns to emulate its exploits, but who, instead of sallying forth like Don Quixote in quest of adventures, takes the pen in place of the sword and digests the romances which have charmed him into a single corpus, "thrumming," like Layamon before him, many old books into one.

Malory's identity has been the occasion of much speculation and conjecture. Bale's notion that he was a Welshman was probably a mere inference from his choice of subject. He has been identified with the Sir Thomas Malory excepted in 1468 from a general pardon; he has been connected with the Malorys of Hutton Conyers, in

Yorkshire; and with the Thomas Malory of Papworth, in Cambridgeshire, whose will, made in September, was proved in October 1469: but at last Professor Kittredge seems to have proved that he was Sir Thomas Malory of Newbold Revell, Warwickshire, a follower of Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, who was member for his county in 1444-45 and died on March 14, 1471. That he was also a follower of Beauchamp's grandson, Warwick the Kingmaker, seems probable from the extremely slight notice taken of him by Caxton when publishing his work under Richard III.: his name is merely mentioned, and that tribute to the author's merits is omitted which might well have been looked for in a posthumous publication. It is remarkable that the book was issued on July 31, 1485, the day before Henry VII.'s embarkation at Harfleur, and only twenty-two days before the battle of Bosworth Field gave the throne to this Welsh prince, who named his son Arthur. No manuscript has ever been found, and it seems certain that the work was unknown until Caxton printed it, and that the impression was made from the author's own copy, or perhaps a *rifacimento* of this by Caxton: for there are numerous oversights in the division of chapters and other points which could hardly have been committed by the author himself. It has also been thought that the remarkable peculiarities of diction, and still more of syntax, with which the book abounds, are more likely to have proceeded from Caxton than Malory.

*Publication of  
"Le Morte  
d'Arthur"  
by Caxton*

Whatever Caxton's sins of omission or commission, he has laid English literature under an immense obligation by insuring the preservation of the book, while his criticism shows how well he could appreciate its desert. He had had, he said, doubts respecting it, inasmuch as "divers men hold opinion that there was no such Arthur, and that all such books as have been made of him be feigned and fables, because that some chronicles make of him no mention, nor remember him nothing, nor of his knights." Happily these doubts were propounded in the hearing of judicious persons, one of whom rejoined "that in him who should say or think that there never was such a king called Arthur might well be aretted<sup>1</sup> great folly and blindness. First, ye may see his sepulchre in the monastery of Glastonbury;" with so much more to the same effect that "I, according to my copy, have set it in imprint, to the intent that noble men may see and learn the noble acts of chivalry, the gentle and virtuous deeds that some knights used in those days, by which they came to honour, and how they that were vicious were punished and put off to shame and rebuke: humbly beseeching all noble lords and ladies, with all other estates of what estate or degree they been of, that shall see or read in this said book and work, that they take the good and honest acts in their remembrance, and to follow the same. Wherein they shall find many joyous and pleasant histories, and noble and renowned acts of humanity, gentleness, and chivalry. For herein may be seen noble chivalry, courtesy, humanity, friendliness, hardiness, love, friendship, cowardice, murder, hate, virtue and sin."

*Sources of  
"Le Morte  
d'Arthur"*

This is the best general account of *Le Morte d'Arthur* that has yet been given, although Mr. Andrew Lang has made a valuable contribution by pointing out how its "splendid patchwork" is harmonised and solemnised by

<sup>1</sup> Adjudged.

For I Wote Wel. of What somerue condicion Women ben in  
 Grece. the Women of this contre ben right good, Wyse, play  
 sant, humble, discrete, sobre, chaste, obedient to their husbon,  
 dis/tresse, secreete, stedfast, euer besyde, & neuer ydle, Attempt  
 rat in speking, and vertuous in alle their Werkis. or atte  
 leste sholde be soo, For Whiche causes so euydent my sayd lord  
 as I suppose thoughte it Was not of necessity to sette in his  
 booke the sayngis of his Auctor socrates touchyng Women  
 But for as moche as I had comādemēt of my sayd lord  
 to correcte and amende Where as I sholde fynde faulte, and  
 othyr fynde I none sauf that he hath left out these dictes &  
 saynges of the Women of Grece, Therefore in accomplisshing  
 his comādemēt for as moche as I am not in certayn Wē  
 der it Was in my lordis coppe or not, or ellis perauenture  
 that the Wynde had blowe ouer the leef, at the tyme of tras  
 lacion of his booke, I purpose to Wryte the same saynges  
 of that Greke Socrates, Whiche Wrote of the Women of  
 grece and nothyng of them of this Foyame, Whom I sup  
 pose he neuer knewe, For if he had I dar plainly saye that  
 he wold haue reserued them inespaciall in his sayd dictes  
 Allway not presumyng to put & sette them in my sayd lor  
 des booke, but in tēde aparte in the rehersayll of the Werkis  
 humbly requirynge al them that shal rede this ltyl reher  
 sayll that yf they fynde ony faulte tarette it to Socrates  
 and not to me Whiche Wryteth as here after foloweth

**S**ocrates sayde That Women ben thapparaylles to  
 cacche men, but they take none but them that shal  
 be pure, or els them that knowe hem not. And  
 he sayde that there is none so grete empesment vnto a man

the dignified conclusion "in tenderness and inexpressible sorrow," as Shelley says of the *Iliad*. Patchwork the book certainly is. The various sources which contributed to form the Lancelot episode, almost the pith of the book, but not originally belonging to the cycle of Arthurian tradition, are fully investigated in Miss Jessie Weston's *Legend of Sir Lancelot du Lac* (1901). Of these, of course, Malory knew nothing. The sources of his compilation, so far as he was distinctly conscious of them or they have hitherto been traced, are thus set forth in Mr. Sidney Lee's article in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. Books I.-IV. are based on the French romance of Merlin, by Robert de Borron. Book V. is from *La Morte Arthure*, an English metrical romance. Book VI. is from the French romance of Lancelot. The sources of Book VII. have not been traced. Books VIII.-X. follow the French romance of Tristan. Books XI.-XIX. follow the French Lancelot with some variations and something original with Malory, or whose sources are unascertained. Books XX. and XXI. for the most part render into prose the original English metrical romance, *Le Mort Arthur*. It will be observed at once that there can be no unity or action in such a medley: what gives the book coherence is not artistic skill, but unity of spirit and feeling. Seldom, perhaps, has translation so universally and deservedly enjoyed the honours usually reserved to original composition. As Mr. Lang observes, the book occupies in English literature a position infinitely higher than its French originals ever held in the literature of France. For these there is no popular revival, but Malory's vitality is attested by edition after edition in the nineteenth century. The principal drawback, vehemently denounced by Roger Ascham, the extent to which the action depends upon adultery, is Malory's *damnosa hereditas* from his Celtic originals. It is, as has been pointed out, an almost unfailing accompaniment of Celtic romance. Malory has frankly accepted it, but has not committed Tennyson's great mistake of insisting upon it to such a degree as to contaminate all the beauty of his work.

If Caxton manipulated Malory to the extent that some have supposed, he at all events did not spoil him. We know from his own criticism upon Chaucer that he admired clearness and brevity, and these he either preserved or communicated to his original. Malory's anomalous constructions may have made the Quintilians of his time as of ours stare and gasp, but they do not render him obscure for the readers of any period. The following is an average example of his generally uniform style :

Then he dressed him again to the castle and jousted with seven knights more and there was none of them might withstand him, but he bare them to the earth. And of these twelve knights he slew in plain jousts four. And the eight knights he made them to swear on the cross of a sword that they should never use the evil customs of the castle. And when he had made them to swear that oath he let them pass. And ever stood the lords and ladies on the castle walls crying and saying : "Knight with the Red Shield, ye have marvellously well done as ever we saw knight do." And therewith came a knight out of the castle unarmed, and said : "Knight with the Red Shield, overmuch damage hast thou done to us this day, therefore return whither thou wilt, for here are no more that will have ado with thee ; for we repent sore that ever thou camest here, for by thee is fordone the



old custom of this castle." And with that word he turned again into the castle, and shut the gates. Then the Knight of the Red Shield turned and called his squires, and so passed forth on his way and rode a great pace.

And when he was past Sir Palomides went to Sir Dinadan and said: "I had never such a shame of one knight that ever I met; and therefore I cast me to ride after him and be revenged with my sword, for on horseback I deem I shall get no worship of him." "Sir Palomides," said Dinadan, "ye shall not meddle with him by my counsel, for ye shall get no worship of him, and for this cause ye have seen him this day have had overmuch to do, and overmuch travailed." "By almighty Jesu," said Palomides, "I shall never be at ease till that I have had ado with him." "Sir," said Dinadan, "I shall give you my beholding." "Well," said Palomides, "then shall ye see how we shall redress our mights." So they took their horses of their varlets and rode after the Knight with the Red Shield; and down



Earl Rivers presenting his Book to Edward IV.

*From the "Dictes and Sayings of the Philosophers," printed by Caxton in 1477  
MS. Lambeth 265*

in a valley beside a fountain they were ware where he was alighted to repose him, and had done off his helm for to drink at the well.

Malory, or rather his French original, was, as will have been seen, an admirable narrator. His great defect is to be almost devoid of those touches of natural magic which adorn the original Celtic romances. Exquisite morsels of an original Cymric or Breton text do indeed appear to gleam forth at times, but these are rarely descriptive. Nor does he abound in set passages of eloquence: one however, Sir Ector's lamentation for Lancelot, has, thanks mainly to his modern editors and imitators, obtained a renown in English literature hardly inferior to that of David's lament for Saul and Jonathan:

*Malory's excellence as a narrator*

Then went Sir Bors unto Sir Ector, and told him how there lay his brother, Sir Lancelot, dead ; and then Sir Ector threw his shield, sword, and helm from him. And when he beheld Sir Lancelot's visage he fell down in a swoon. And when he waked it was hard for any tongue to tell the doleful complaints that he made for his brother. "Ah, Lancelot," he said, "thou wert head of all Christian knights, and now, I dare say," said Sir Ector, "thou Sir Lancelot, there thou liest, that thou wert never matched of earthly knight's hand. And thou wert the courteste knight that ever bare shield. And thou wert the truest friend to thy lover that ever bestrode horse. And thou wert the truest lover of a sinful man that ever loved woman. And thou wert the kindest man that ever struck with sword. And thou wert the goodliest person that ever came among press of knights. And thou was the meekest man and the gentlest that ever ate in hall among ladies. And

thou wert the sternest knight to thy mortal foe that ever put spear in the rest." Then there was weeping and dolour out of measure.

Our mention of Caxton as Malory's publisher and editor has foreshadowed the event which, even more than the great competing achievement of the discovery of America, has made the fifteenth century glorious in the annals of the world. This is not the place to enter into the questions connected with the discovery of printing. The one essential fact is that, by whomsoever and wheresoever invented, the art for several years after its manifestation virtually remained the exclusive property of Gutenberg's city. In 1460 it emigrated from Mainz to Strasburg, in 1461 it was planted at Bamberg, but almost everything that was printed was executed at Mainz by Mainz workmen, until in



Printing in the Fifteenth Century

From "Stände und Handwerker," by Jobst Amman

1462 an event otherwise unimportant, a contest for the archbishopric between rival prelates, scattered the artisans over Europe, and with them the seeds of many sciences, and the sparks of many conflagrations. Nothing could more forcibly illustrate the want of a reading public, the anti-social character of trade restrictions, and the extraordinary unimaginativeness of mankind at large. The one person who seems to have had anything like a glimpse of its momentous character was the Cardinal of Cusa, who, according to the Bishop of Aleria, so ardently desired the introduction of printing into Italy, that the Bishop cannot but attribute the accomplishment of his aspiration to his intercession with the Almighty after his decease. It came in 1465, but the printers in Italy continued to be Germans, until in 1471 Philippus de Lignamine appeared upon the scene, and the good priest Clemens Patavinus taught himself the art without having seen a printer at work. It is a glory of England that while the typographic art was introduced into most other countries by foreigners, it was given to her by a citizen of her own. The first printers, moreover, were for the

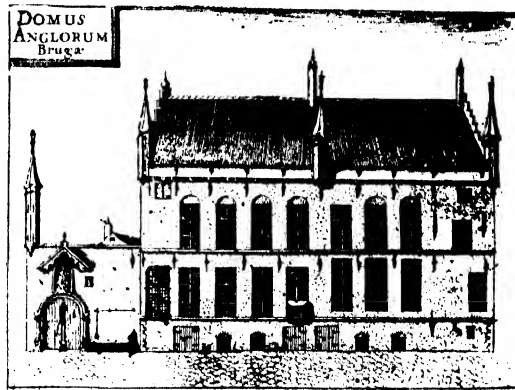
Printing  
invented in  
Germany

most part mere handicraftsmen, who were obliged to have recourse to scholars for their prefaces and their dedications, for their indexes and the correction of their press. But WILLIAM CAXTON was a man of letters and a man of affairs. He was not brought up to the trade of printing, but condescended to it after having exercised functions regarded by his contemporaries as much more important. He needed no advice in the selection of the books he printed, and, while strictly adhering to his trade after once taking it up, wrote enough in the way of comment and illustration to entitle himself to an honourable place on the roll of English authors.

**William Caxton** was born in the Weald of Kent, perhaps near the manor of Haddon, which had formerly belonged to a family of the same name. The condition

*William  
Caxton*

of his parents is not expressly stated, but they were probably in moderately good circumstances, since Caxton in later life expresses his obligations to them for having sent him to school, and they were subsequently able to apprentice him to a wealthy London mercer, who became Lord Mayor in the following year. The date of the apprenticeship was 1438, justifying the supposition that Caxton was born about 1422. In 1441 Caxton's master, Robert Large, died, bequeathing to him twenty



The House at Bruges occupied by Caxton

*From "Flandria Illustrata," 1641*

marks as a token of esteem. Caxton soon afterwards went to Bruges, probably to represent his employers, and in 1446 he set up in business there on his own account. He became a member of the Mercers' Company at home, and must have risen to great credit abroad, for when, in 1462, Edward IV. gave the Merchant Adventurers a new charter for the better government of the English merchants settled in the Low Countries, and accorded them power to appoint a governor at Bruges, Caxton was the first to fill the office, which was no sinecure. "With a small jury of fellow-merchants he decided all disputes among English merchants in the Low Countries; he regulated and personally overlooked the importation and exportation of merchandise, and he corresponded with the English Government on commercial matters." Functions like these served as an introduction to diplomacy. Caxton was made one of the Commissioners to renew a treaty with the Duke of Burgundy, which business, together with the complications growing out of it, gave him employment for several years. When at length, in 1468, matters were arranged through the marriage of Edward IV.'s sister with the new Duke of Burgundy, Caxton seems to have found the need of occupation; for five months after the definitive conclusion of the treaty in October 1468 he began to turn *Le Recueil des Histoires de Troye* into English "as a preventive against idleness." Partly from increasing partiality for literature, partly from the favour shown him by the Duchess, he gradually drifted from a mercantile into a court life. In October 1470 King Edward

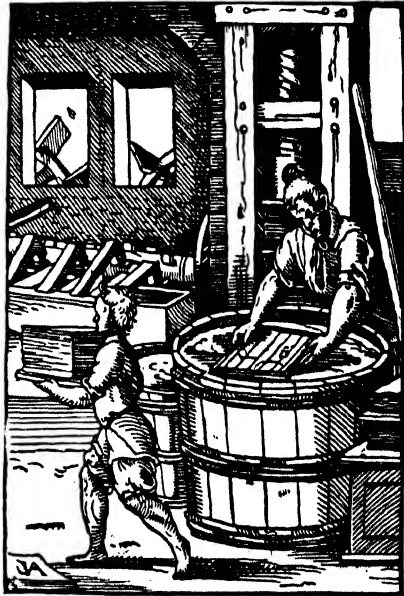
the playfyr of god to whome I  
 submytte al myn entete to write  
 no thyng that ought to be bla-  
 med/ne but that it be to the hel-  
 the & sauacion of euery persone/

**W**henne for as moche I  
 late had synnysshed in  
 enprynt the book of the noble &  
 byctoryous kyng Arthur fyrst  
 of the thre moost noble & wor-  
 thy of crysten kynges/and also  
 tofore had reduced in to englyssh  
 the noble hystorye & lyf of Go-  
 desof of bolygh kyng of Iheru-  
 salem/last of the said in worthy  
 Somme persones of noble estate  
 and degre haue despyd me to  
 reduce thystorye and lyf of the  
 noble and crysten prync Char-  
 les the grete kyng of fraunce &  
 emperour of Rome / the second  
 of the thre worthy/to thende that  
 thystoryes /actes/ & lyues may  
 be had in our maternal tongue  
 lyke as they be in latyn or in  
French / For the moost quanty-  
 te of the people vnderstonde not  
 latyn ne french here in this no-  
 ble royaume of england/ And for  
 to satisfye the desyre & requeste  
 of my good synghuler lordes &  
 speccial maysters and frendes  
 I haue enprynted and concluded  
 in my self to reduce this sayd  
 book in to our englyssh /as all  
 aboynge and playnely ye may  
 rede/here/ and see in thys book

here folowynge/beseechynge al them  
 that shal fynde faute in the same  
 to correcte and amende it/ And  
 also to pardone me of the rude &  
 symple reducyng /and though  
 so be there be no gaye termes/ne  
 substyl ne nelbe eloquence /yet I  
 hope that it shal be vnderstonden  
 & to that entente I haue specy-  
 ally reduced it /after the sym-  
 ple connyng that god hath lente  
 to me/wherof I humbly & wyth  
 al my herte thanke hym / & also  
 am bounden to praye for my fa-  
 der and moders soules/ that in  
 my yowthe sette me to schole /by  
 wyshe by the suffraunce of god  
 I gete my lyuynge I hope truly  
 And that I may so do & conty-  
 nue I beseeche hym to graunte me  
 of his grace / and so to laboure  
 and occupye my self vertuously  
 that I may come oute of dette &  
 dedely synne/that after this lyf  
 I may come to hys blyss in he-  
 uen AMEN /

appeared in Flanders in the character of a fugitive and exile, and Caxton can hardly have failed to be brought into connection with him. In 1471 he completed the translation of the *Recueil*, and hit upon the idea which made him famous by resolving not merely to have the book printed, but to print it himself. To this end it was needful for him to learn the art of printing, so far as we know not possessed, certainly not exercised in the capacity of master-printer, by any Englishman before him. France, which has been thought, not without plausible grounds, to have had the first glimmering conception of the art, had practically received it only the year before from German hands. Spain had still to wait three years, Poland four; and although the art had probably been practised for some years, in Holland, there was as yet no Dutch book with a date. Germany and Italy alone were active: and Caxton is the only man in fifteenth-century Europe of whom it can be affirmed with certainty that he deliberately took up printing from a distinct perception of its importance as an agent in the propagation of literature.

Caxton's principal coadjutor, whose name should always be remembered along with his, was probably actuated by different motives. We are told that Colard Mansion of Bruges, had been "a skilful caligrapher," whose reason for taking up printing would be the same as that which has in our own day induced so many miniaturists to turn photographers. Though Caxton's colleague, he does not appear to have been his instructor. It seems probable that Caxton learned printing at Cologne, and, returning thence to Bruges, executed his *Recuyell* in partnership with Mansion about 1474. It was, therefore, the first English printed book, but not the first book printed in England. *The Game and Play of the Chess*, not a treatise upon the game but a moralisation of it, translated from a French version of the Latin original of Jacobus de Cessolis, was until recently considered as the first printed English book, but is now allowed to have been but the second, and like its predecessor to have been printed at Bruges. Caxton says that he completed the translation in March 1475, and the book was no doubt printed in the same year. In 1476 Caxton returned to his native country after an absence of thirty-five years, and established himself at Westminster, renting a shop from the Dean and Chapter at the annual rent of ten shillings from Michaelmas 1476. In November 1477 he issued the first book printed in England, *The Dictes and Sayings of the Philosophers*, a translation from the French by no less influential a person than Earl Rivers, the King's brother-in-law and governor of the



Caxton's  
career as a  
printer

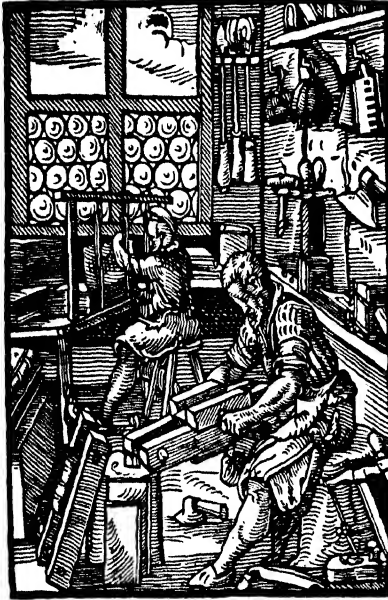
#### Paper-making in the Fifteenth Century

From "*Stünde und Handwerker*," by Jobst Amman

little Prince of Wales, for whose prospective benefit the version was probably made. Edward IV. and his successors did themselves honour by their patronage of Caxton, who also took rank as a man of letters by his publication of the *Dictes*, revising Rivers's version at the latter's request, and humorously dilating on his omission of Socrates in his relation to the female sex.

Caxton as  
printer and  
publisher

The highly interesting history of Caxton's press, so ably elucidated by Mr. Blades, only falls within our subject in so far as it affords a clue to the literary taste and general culture of the time. On these points Caxton, how-



Bookbinding in the Fifteenth Century

From "*Stünde und Handwerker*," by Jobst Amman

ever unintentionally, is a sure guide, for he was an eminently practical man. The whole character of his mind, mirrored in the general style of his publications, assures us that he would be the last person to give his countrymen what, however salutary for them, they were not conscious of requiring. When we find that he never prints a classic in the original language, we may be sure that there was then no demand for such literature in England. Had Caxton's press been set up at Oxford or Cambridge, he might possibly have been tempted by the prospect of learned patronage to speculate in Latin editions of Latin books; but clearly no allurements of the kind presented itself at London or Westminster. On the other hand, Englishmen did not object

to read classical authors in their own language, and Caxton published versions of Cicero, *De Amicilia* and *De Senectute*, which latter may have been that made for Sir John Fastolf. More significant is the evidence of a taste for English poetry afforded by Caxton's editions of Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate, works expensive to produce, and upon which he would not have ventured without the assurance of popular support. His edition of Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* is an enterprise of the same class. On the whole, the leading departments of literature as represented in the Caxton press may be defined as theology and romance. The total number of his known publications, now extant, issued in England between his first publication in 1477 and his death in 1491, is seventy-one, excluding repeated editions of the same work, which would raise the number to 102. Allowing for the deference which he was compelled as a man of business to accord to popular taste, great credit is due to Caxton for his power of initiative in the conduct of his affairs. Everything appears to have been done by himself. There is no trace of any help from a

reader or a literary adviser. He was his own editor and generally his own translator. He did not, indeed, decline to receive suggestions; the *Book of Good Manners* was translated and published at the request of his friend William Pratt; and the remarkable publication of the official letters from the Republic of Venice to Pope Sixtus IV. must have been made at the instance of the Venetians. In the main, however, Caxton's publications undoubtedly exhibit the tastes of Caxton as well as of his public. It may be regretted that he had not some counsellor near him who could have influenced him in the direction of typographic elegance, for he was no Jenson or Aldus. Homeliness is the expression by which his type and his illustrations are best described. The idea that he could have any call to vie with the grandeur of the German or the elegance of the Italian type evidently never occurred to him. With the latter, indeed, he could not compete, for he never uses the Roman character. Yet he was nice respecting his type, using no less than eight founts at various times, but he never once stumbles into beauty. Paper, just beginning to

be manufactured in England, was imported by him from the Low Countries.

In one point of view Caxton's services to his country's literature cannot be overestimated; he poured new blood into its exhausted veins by the numerous translations which he executed with an industry almost incredible in one who personally superintended the mechanical part of his business, and was moreover continually engaged in commercial affairs. To appreciate the magnitude of his service we must consider that literary English prose was in Caxton's day almost extinct. The nation did indeed possess a monument of noble diction in Wycliffe's Bible, but this was proscribed and inaccessible. The other prose books of the fourteenth century had become obsolete through the mutation of



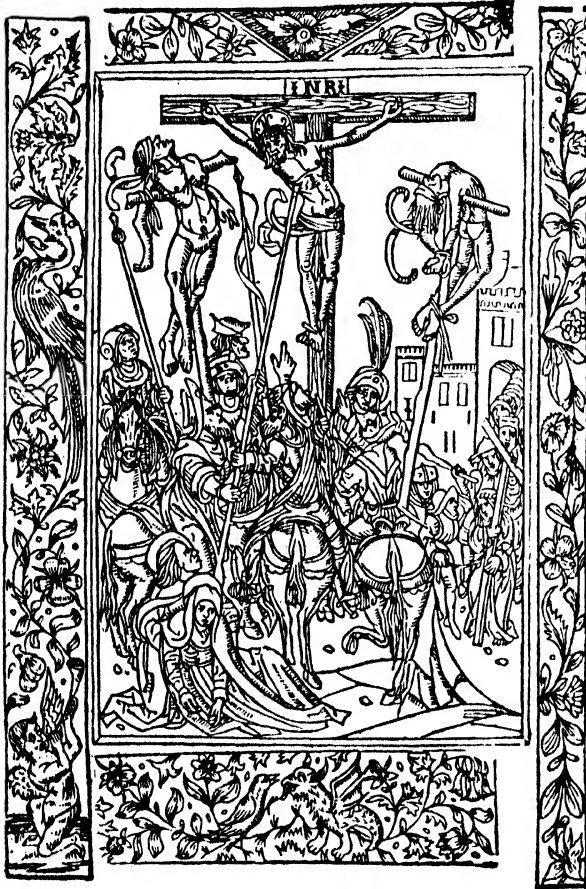
St. Jerome and his Lion

From the "Golden Legend," printed by Caxton in 1483

Caxton as  
translator

the times, and except for Malory, who himself owed his preservation to Caxton, the fifteenth century had done nothing to supply their place. Caxton could not write original books, but he could render books from other languages, and, so great was the dearth and penury of English letters at the time, that he was actually obliged to do so to keep his press going. Many of the French books he translated were romances, but others, such as the *Knight of the Tower's*

*advice to his daughters*, *Cato*, and *The Doctrinal of Sapience*, were works of morality; and others, such as *Æsop*, were French versions of classical originals. Caxton, nevertheless, was not unskilled in Latin; he used the original text as well as the French version when translating the *Golden Legend* of Jacobus de Voragine; and a translation by him of six books of the *Metamorphoses*, strangely left unprinted in our day, is extant in the Pepysian Library at Magdalen College, Cambridge. One book, *Reynard the Fox*, was translated by him from the Dutch or Flemish, with which residence in the Low Countries had made him acquainted. The general character of his publications is proof that he wrought for a



From the "XV. O's," circa 1491

*The fifteen prayers, so called from the fact of their all commencing with the letter O*

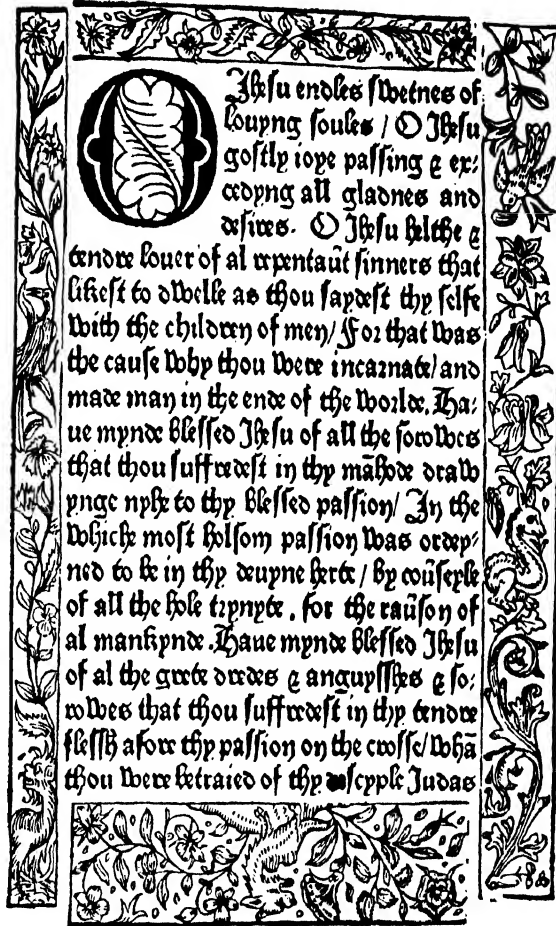
cultivated society, a genuine, though limited reading public. He speaks of many copies of his Chaucer being bought by "gentlemen." Professional literature is hardly represented; there are no legal books, and but one medical: nor is there anything relating to agriculture, handicraft, the fine arts, or military affairs.

Of Caxton's one hundred and two publications thirty-eight exist only in a fragmentary condition. Several, no doubt, have entirely perished. Those extant books contain more than fourteen thousand pages, usually of folio size. When the amount of translation is also taken into account, this manifests a



prodigious industry sustained for fourteen years. The little we know of Caxton personally seems to indicate that he was in addition an active member of society, well esteemed by his fellow citizens. At one time he audited the parochial accounts. He died at some uncertain date in 1401, and was interred in St. Margaret's, Westminster, where his memory is honoured with a tablet and a stained glass window.

Caxton's literary gifts were not inconsiderable. His experience of life, both as merchant and courtier, had been of a nature to enlarge his mind, and endow him with fluency of expression and ease of manner. These qualities are apparent when he speaks for himself, as in his prefaces. As a translator he did much to enrich the language, something also to alloy it by an over liberal employment of French words and idioms, hardly to be avoided under his circumstances. He did not pique himself upon fidelity to his original, nor was it requisite that he should, as he was not dealing with masterpieces, and had neither the ambition nor the capacity to produce a monument of fine English like Lord



*Caxton as author and critic*

From the "XV. O'es," circa 1491

*The fifteen prayers, so called from the fact of their all commencing with the letter O*

Berners' Froissart. He frequently paraphrases and interpolates, but his versions are not really the worse. That he could appreciate the literary rank of a great writer is shown by his enthusiastic praise of Chaucer which we are about to quote; even though, except by the slight references to "metre" (stanzas) and "rhyme" (heroic couplets), it would hardly have been discovered that he was speaking of a poet. Of Chaucer's services to the language he writes much as a critic of the eighteenth century might have written about Dryden. When his orthography is

After dyuerse werkes made/ translated and achieved/ ha  
 uynge noo werke in hande. I sittynge in my studie where as  
 laye many dyuerse painfflettis and bookeys. happened that  
 to my hande cam a lytyl booke in frenshe. Whiche late was  
 translated oute of latyn by some noble clerke of fraunce whi  
 che booke is named Eneydos/ made in latyn by that noble  
 poete & grete clerke Vyrgyle/ Whiche booke I salde ouer and  
 reade therein. Hollo after the generall destruccyon of the gre  
 te Troye, Eneas departed kerynge his olde fader anchises  
 vpon his sholdres/ his lytyl son polus on his honde. his wy  
 fe wyth moche othe people folowynge/ and hollo he shrypped  
 and departed wyth alle thystorpe of his aduentures that he  
 had er he cam to the achieument of his conquest of ytalpe  
 as all a longe shall be shewed in this present boke. In whi  
 che booke I had grete playfyr. by cause of the fayr and hone  
 st termes & wordes in frenshe/ Whych I neuer salde to fo  
 re lyke. ne none so playsaunt ne so wel ordered. Whiche boo  
 ke as me semed sholde be moche requysyte to noble men to see  
 as wel for the eloquence as the hystories/ Hollo wel that  
 many honderd yeres passed was the sayd booke of eneydos  
 wyth other werkes made and lerneid dayly in scolis specyal  
 ly in ytalpe & other places/ Whiche hystorie the sayd Vyrgyle  
 made in metre/ And whan I had aduysed me in this sayd bo  
 ke. I delibered and concluded to translate it in to englysshe  
 And forthwyth toke a penne & yntre and wrote a leef or  
 tweyne /Whych I ouersalde agayn to correcte it/ And whā  
 I salde the fayr & straunge termes therein/ I doubted that it  
 sholde not please some gentylmen Whiche late blamed me  
 sayeng y in my translacions I had ouer curpous termes  
 Whiche coude not be vnderstande of comyn peple /and desired  
 me to vse olde and homely termes in my translacions. and

modernised it will be seen how nearly he approaches the standard English of our day :

Great thanks, laud, and honour ought to be given unto the clerks, poets, and historiographers, that have written many noble books of wisdom, of the lives, passions, and miracles, of holy saints, of histories of noble and famous acts and feats, and of the chronicles with the beginning of the creation of the world unto this present time, by which we be daily informed and have knowledge of many things of whom we should not have known if they had not left us their monuments written. Among whom and in especial to-fore all other we ought to give a singular laud unto that noble and great philosopher Geoffry Chaucer, the which for his ornate writing in our tongue may well have the name of a laureate poet. For to-fore that he by his labour embellished, ornated, and made fair our English, in this royaume was had rude speech and incongrue, as yet it appeareth by old books, which at this day ought not to have place nor be compared among us to his beauteous volumes and adornate writings, of whom he made many books and treatises of many a noble history as well in metre as in rhyme and prose, and them so craftily made that he comprehended his matters in short, quick and high sentences, eschewing prolixity, casting away the chaff of superfluity, and showing the picked grain of sentence uttered by crafty and sugared eloquence. Of whom among all other of his books I purpose to imprint by the grace of God his *Tales of Canterbury*, in which I find many a noble history of every estate and degree, first rehearsing the conditions and the array of each of them as proper as possible is to be said, and after these tales, which be of noblesse, wisdom, gentleness, mirth, and also of very holiness and virtue, wherein he finisheth this said book, which book I have diligently overseen and duly examined to the end that it be made according to his own making. For I find many of the said books which writers have abridged and many things left out ; and in some places have set certain verses that he never made nor set in his book, of which books so incorrect was one brought to me six years passed which I supposed had been very true and correct. And according to the same I did to imprint a certain number of them, which anon were sold to many and divers gentlemen, of whom one gentleman came to me and said that this book was not according in many places to the book Geoffry Chaucer had made. To whom I answered that I had made it according to my copy, and that by me was nothing added or minished. Then he said he knew a book which his father had and much loved, that was very true and according to his [Chaucer's] own first book by him made, and said more, if I would imprint it again he would get me the same book for a copy, howbeit he wist well that his father would not gladly depart from it.

Caxton proceeds to describe how, the more correct manuscript being courteously placed at his disposition by the gentleman's father, he amended his former edition by its aid. The probable date of this edition is 1478, and that of the improved one 1484. The episode shows how faulty MSS. were becoming when printing appeared to stop further degeneracy, but also in some cases to perpetuate errors already existing. He was succeeded by his apprentice, Wynkyn de Worde, and Richard Pynson about the same time took up the business of his rival, William de Machlinia. We part from him with the remark that in his day literature was first officially recognised as a meet subject for encouragement by Government by a proclamation of Richard the Third repealing duties on the importation of books, and allowing them to be sold in England by foreign booksellers.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE LITERATURE OF SCOTLAND TO THE END OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY—THE BALLAD

*Scotch and  
ballad litera-  
ture*

WE have now arrived at the brink of the great revival of literature which has continued to our own times. The chief barrier between writer and reader has been broken down by the invention of printing, and henceforth the stream of literary production is to be continuous, and literature is to acquire more, and more influence as an agency in the affairs of the world. Hitherto, as we have had ample opportunity of observing, the course of literature has been liable to such interruptions as to render it difficult of treatment as a whole: but henceforth every people with pretensions to civilisation has a continuous literary history. The wish to preserve as much continuity as possible in the record of British literature has induced us to reserve for special treatment two departments clearly demarcated from the rest of the subject. These are the literature of Scotland and ballad literature, both originating and attaining a considerable development before the introduction of printing, and therefore to be dealt with ere we trace the consequences of the greatest intellectual revolution hitherto effected by a material process. This parenthesis involves no considerable retrogression in our narrative, as literature hardly existed in Scotland before Barbour in the middle of the fourteenth century: and the ballad, though already on the lips of the people, rarely enlisted the pen of the scribe until an even later date.

*English and  
Scotch nation-  
ality virtually  
identical*

Before entering upon the history of Scottish literature, it may be necessary to remove some misconceptions. We are accustomed to regard the Scotland prior to the accession of James I. as a foreign country, but in fact, however politically estranged, the Lowland Scotch, with whose literature alone we are concerned, were in blood and character as English as any of the dwellers to the south of the Tweed. There was indeed a large Celtic admixture in the Western Lowlands, where British chieftains had for a considerable period maintained their independence, but this has for centuries ceased to be recognisable. The Anglian colonisation of the Eastern Lowlands is manifested by the fact that the Scottish metropolis itself bears the name (Edwin's burgh) given to it by the Northumbrian monarch who made it his capital in the seventh century. At subsequent periods, indeed, the Eastern Lowlands were conquered, now by Celts, now by Danes, but the close resemblance of the Northumbrian dialect to the Scotch shows how slightly the composition of the population was affected by these political changes. "The Danes chose

Deira, not Bernicia ; their traces are found in Yorkshire, not in Northumberland." Cumberland for a long time belonged to Scotland, the English Kings did not finally renounce their claims upon the Lothians until 1016, but neither the linguistic nor the ethnological character of the districts was affected except by the absorption of the Celtic element. Meanwhile a powerful Celtic monarchy was growing up in central Scotland, formed by the fusion of the Picts, an ancient people of uncertain extraction, but entirely Celticised, with the Scoti or immigrants from Scotia, *i.e.*, Ireland. But the monarch under whom this kingdom was finally consolidated, Malcolm Canmore, was half an Englishman in virtue of his mother ; his queen, a princess of the royal family of Hungary, was half Saxon as so ; and ere long a succession of matrimonial alliances made his successors Anglo-Normans. When, at the beginning of the twelfth century, King Edgar made Edinburgh his capital, the Celtic element retired definitively into the background. The institutions of the kingdom became substantially Anglo-Norman ; and, except in the illiterate Highlands, Saxon speech prevailed so thoroughly that the Scotch poets describe their language as "English." The first author who professed to write "Scottish" was Gavin Douglas, under the influence of the anti-English feeling generated by the disaster of Flodden Field.

The slow literary progress of Scotland in comparison with England is solely attributable to external causes—the poor and unpeopled condition of the country, the perpetual feuds, foreign and intestine, and the absence of any foundation for a literary superstructure. England possessed a national literature before the Conquest, which although almost obliterated was capable of revival : she also had an imported literature which for long supplied its place, and by which, when the time for fusion came, it was enormously enriched. Scotland had no ancient indigenous literature for modern writers to develop, and no imported literature to rouse the emulation and stimulate the ambition of her own children. The themes of her poets were frequently national, but their execution and even their language were English. The best of them continually remind us of Chaucer, but not until near the close of the fifteenth century do they seem in any measure to prefigure Burns or Scott. No one thought of attempting prose literature. Scotland in the thirteenth century produced powerful minds in Michael Scott and Duns Scotus, but they wrote in Latin on subjects infinitely remote from the comprehension of ordinary readers. No one seemed to have an idea that the ordinary speech could be fit for anything beyond the transaction of the ordinary affairs of life.

*Slow progress  
of Scotch  
literature*

Many, perhaps most, ancient literatures claim a patriarchal founder, who from some points of view wears the semblance of a fable and from others that of a fact. Scotland has her Orpheus or Linus in THOMAS of ERCILDOUNE, called also THOMAS the RHYMER, who does not indeed precede her Ennius, John Barbour, by any immense interval of time, but is still sufficiently in advance of him to fulfil the requisites of a venerable ancestor, could we but be sure that he was indeed an author. His actual existence is unquestionable. Ercildoune

*Thomas the  
Rhymer*

or Earlstoun is a village in Berwickshire, and ancient parchments demonstrate that two Thomases, father and son, dwelt there as landowners in the thirteenth century. The tradition of poetry appears to attach to the elder, whose appellation of "Thomas the Rhymer" might seem decisive on the point if, by a strange coincidence, "Rhymer" were not also another form of "Rymour," a surname then common in Berwickshire. His claim to the gift of prophecy, the most exalted attribute of the *vates sacer*, is shown to have really existed in the popular estimation by the circumstantial account of his prediction, which should perhaps rather be regarded as an instance of second sight, of the death of Alexander III. in 1285. He is also the subject of fairy legends, to be subsequently adverted to, and is named as a poet and author of a romance on the story of Tristrem in Robert Mannyng's metrical English Chronicle, composed in 1338. Mannyng's testimony is very clear. He says, complaining of the corruption of poetical texts by the minstrels :

I see in song, in sedgeyng<sup>1</sup> tale  
Of Erceldoun and of Kendale<sup>2</sup>  
None them says as they them wrought,  
And in their saying it seems nought.  
That may thou hear in Sir Tristrem  
Over gestes it has the steem<sup>3</sup>  
Over all that is or was,  
If men it said as made Thomas  
But I hear it no man so say,  
That of some couple some is away :  
So their fair saying here befor  
Is their travail near forlorn.

Mannyng, then, writing fifty or sixty years after Thomas of Ercildoune, affirms him to have been the author of a poem on Tristrem, sufficiently popular to be habitually in the mouths of minstrels and reciters. This is a strong testimony. It is thought to be invalidated by the fact that Gottfried of Strasburg, writing his standard poem on the Tristrem story nearly a century before Thomas of Ercildoune, declares himself indebted for it to another Thomas, Thomas of Brittany, whom chronology forbids us to identify with the Rhymer. But it is by no means clear that Thomas of Brittany was a poet. Internal evidence proves Gottfried's poem to be derived from a French version, which may have been a translation from a poem by this Breton Thomas, but is just as likely to have been merely based upon traditions transmitted by him. He is not mentioned elsewhere, and we are inclined to identify him with a Welsh Thomas of the eleventh or twelfth century, the Thomas ab Einion Offeiriadd who is recorded to have collected, not invented or versified, the traditions relating to Taliesin. He probably did not rest there, and if he put together the story of Tristrem, and his redaction passed into Brittany, he may well have been the common source drawn upon by

<sup>1</sup> Saying, narrative.

<sup>2</sup> "Kendale" does not seem to be mentioned elsewhere as a poet ; perhaps he is to be identified with Richard Kendall, a writer on music of uncertain date, who is said to have been a monk of Sherborne

<sup>3</sup> T'steem

both the German and the Scotch poet. Mannyng, it is evident, has no knowledge of any Thomas connected with the Tristrem story other than Thomas of Ercildoune, or any doubt that Thomas was a Scotchman. If so, he may rank as the venerable father of Scotch poetry, since although the original Scotch text may have disappeared, the crabbed dialect of Northumbrian English in which the poem exists is hardly distinguishable from Scotch. In fact, however, it is not always easy to determine on which side of the border an ancient poem was written: and it can only be affirmed that the dialect of "Tristrem" as we have it is Northumbrian, very probably in the transcript of a more southern scribe, and that it was composed in the latter half of the thirteenth century.

Personally, Thomas of Ercildoune might well sustain the character of the patriarch of Scottish poetry, for he appears not merely in history as a prophet, but in legend as the companion of beings of another world. A metrical romance composed in his name more than a century after his death represents him as the

La amtesse de Dunbar deman  
da a Thomas de Ercildoune  
que la queie de seue prendre  
pou e pl la resounde e de  
Then man as mid alyne of a  
capped man  
Then mon is lenege of seumes  
pou pou is othen  
Then londpou first and first  
is fild  
Then hines kendles ofc heyston  
Then pou e alle lenege coe  
dege  
Then mon make fables of his  
tes e seles caples lipp fies  
Then pou becomis mo no lynch  
and make is a ffor dale  
Then he alde is ayn and  
he neke is come f don nore  
Then bamounne po danged  
pou dedemen  
Then men ledos men in joues  
to lynch e to sellen  
Then a fress of Chap  
There is chynnged for a  
cote of ten manke  
Then prinde fies e jess is  
leyn in fform  
Then a fress ne mep hym lide  
as hane in fform f pe  
englof na shal hym fonde

The Prophecy of Thomas of Ercildoune to the Countess of Dunbar in answer to her question as to the ending of the Scotch War  
British Museum, Harl. MS. 2253

The legendary  
Thomas

favoured lover of the Queen of Fairy, as residing with her for three years in her enchanted realm, and as at length dismissed to earth lest he should be appropriated by the fiend, who is about to make his triennial visitation of Elfland, exactly like a bishop. As a parting gift the Fairy Queen endows him with the faculty of prophecy, which he turns to account by predicting a series of events in Scottish history some considerable time after they have taken place. These predictions are probably from the same hand as the romance, which claims to be founded upon an earlier poem in Scottish, being itself in a North English dialect. If, as is supposed, this original poem ended with the return of Thomas to Fairie, it cannot have been written by him, but no doubt embodies a genuine tradition respecting him, for which there are many precedents in legendary literature. Tales of heroes enjoying the favours of nymphs, and of persons endowed by supernatural beings with the gift of prophecy, go back to Calypso and Cassandra. It is to be regretted that the Fairy Queen omitted to endow Thomas with the gift of poetry, which would have done him more service with posterity. If, as we should wish to deem him, the premier poet of Scotland, his title to fame is purely chronological, for the poetical merit of his *Tristrem* is small, after every allowance for the transfusion into another dialect which it may have undergone. Its defects are not so much of language, as of insensibility to the beauty and significance of the story : the versification is not inharmonious, but the poet, unlike Gottfried of Strasburg, follows his original with matter of fact servility, and seems afraid of saying more than is set down for him : hence the strongest situations are slurred over and thrown away. The following stanza may serve as a specimen of the style :

Tristrem tok his stede,  
 And lepe ther on to ride ;  
 The Quen bad him her lede,  
 To schip him beside ;  
 Tristrem did as she bede ;  
 In wood he gan her hide ;  
 To th'erl he seyde in that nede ;  
 " Thou hast ytent thy pride,  
 Thou dote ;  
 With thine harp thou wonne her that tide,  
 Thou tint<sup>1</sup> her with my rote."<sup>2</sup>

*John Barbour*

If the author of *Sir Tristrem* was an Englishman, primacy of Scotch song in point of date falls to one most worthy of the distinction, JOHN BARBOUR. He was probably born about 1316, and first appears in 1357 as enjoying the dignity of Archdeacon of Aberdeen. In that year he receives a safe conduct from the King of England to escort three scholars to Oxford, Scotland not then possessing any university of her own. In the same year he represents the Bishop of Aberdeen in a council held to consider the ways and means of ransoming the captive King David ; and in 1364, 1365, and 1368 he has further safe conducts, apparently connected with educational matters. In 1372, and

<sup>1</sup> Lost.

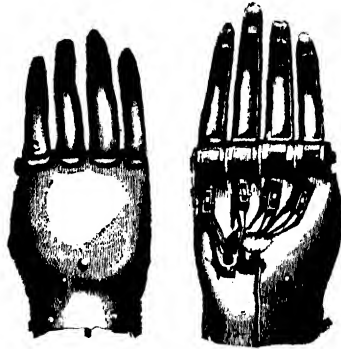
<sup>2</sup> Lute.



at various subsequent periods, he is an auditor of the exchequer, where he would come into contact with another poet, Sir Hugh of Eglintoun, afterwards to be mentioned. In 1375 we first hear of his connection with literature, he having in that year, according to his own statement, composed the *Bruce*, the poem on the exploits of Robert Bruce which became one of the two mediæval national epics. Until lately this was supposed to be his sole contribution to poetry, and it would suffice for his fame. But in 1866 Henry Bradshaw found, blended with a manuscript of Lydgate's *Troy Book*, two fragments containing more than two thousand lines of a translation, previously unknown, of Guido de Columnis' history of the siege of Troy, attributed to Barbour in the MS., and undoubtedly his.

A month or two later, the same acute and fortunate explorer recognised in a volume of metrical Lives of the Saints clear proofs of a Scotch origin, and sound reasons for attributing it to Barbour. The latter conclusion, at first unanimously accepted, has been recently impugned; but the resemblance in diction and metre between the Legends and the *Bruce*, leave, notwithstanding some minor discrepancies, little doubt that Bradshaw was right. The work declares itself, moreover, to be the work of an aged poet, and Barbour lived until 1395. Its principal source is the Golden Legend

of Jacobus de Voragine. It consists of upwards of thirty-three thousand verses, and incidentally states that the author has also versified the Gospels and the Legends of the Virgin. These books are lost: but another epic of importance has been claimed for Barbour upon strong grounds. This is the translation of the French metrical romance of Alexander the Great printed about 1580 as an anonymous work, after a manuscript dating the composition in 1438. Mr. George Neilson first recognised the fact that this translation contains so many lines borrowed from Barbour's *Bruce*, and exhibits so much affinity to that poem in its rhymes and its mannerisms, as to prove that either Barbour possessed the most servile of imitators in the translator, or that he was the translator himself. There are obvious difficulties in the way of either hypothesis: yet one of them must be true, unless we can believe that, as has been suggested, the *Bruce* was rewritten towards the end of the fifteenth century with the aid of the *Alexander*. This would require us to admit that the adulterated version entirely effaced the genuine one, which seems hardly possible. Two arguments seem to us to speak for Barbour's authorship—the probability that the translator of the *Troy Book* would also translate the *Alexander*; and the improbability that a poet of such facility should have been so nearly silent until his production of the *Bruce* about the age of sixty. This is certainly not the wont of poets. The *Troy Book* and



The Steel Hand of Carslogie

*The iron hand said to have been made by order of the Bruce for De Clephanes, who lost his left hand in one of Bruce's battles*

the *Alexander* together would provide sufficient occupation, and not more than sufficient, for his poetical prime of life.

Barbour died on March 13, 1395, still holding his office as Archdeacon, and in the enjoyment of a pension, supposed to have been conferred as the reward of a poem on the genealogy of the house of Stuart, the new royal family of Scotland. It is now lost, but its existence and his authorship are attested by Wyntoun.

*Barbour's  
"Bruce"*

Perhaps the most salient quality of Barbour is his winning amiability. Though his theme requires him to slay multitudes upon paper, he is all sun-shine and smiles. For a patriotic poet he is marvellously devoid of enmity



Dunfermline Abbey, the burial-place of Robert the Bruce

"They haue hym had to Dunfermyne  
And hym solemynly erdit syne."

or rancour against the Southron. It is true that the story he has to tell is one eminently adapted to inspire a Scotchman with good humour; yet even so the absence of vindictiveness or malevolence is surprising. His good nature and a touch of chivalric generosity dispose him to represent the enemy in the best light; it was well for Scotland that he was not called upon to be her Tyrtæus, but that the easier task devolved upon him of celebrating her victories after the storm of battle

had rolled by. It cannot be said that he manifests any lack of interest in his theme, he is proud of his hero; but the register of his hero's deeds is less like an epic than an inventory. Barbour takes things as they come, and makes no attempt to mould them into artistic symmetry. His principal talent is for description, in which he often excels. Innocent as he was of Homer, it is interesting to note how, like Homer, he was attracted by the flash of bared weapons and burnished armour:—

Sir Aymer, on the tother party,  
Gathered so great a chivalry,  
That he might be three thousand ner,  
Armed and dight in good maner;  
That, as a man of great noblay,  
He held toward his tryst his way.  
When the set day comen was,  
He sped him fast toward the place  
That he nemmyt for to fight.  
The sun was risen shining bright,  
That schaut on the scheldis brade.

In twa exchelis<sup>1</sup> ordanyt he had,  
 The folk that he had in leading  
 The King, while soon in the morning  
 Saw first coming their first exchele,  
 Arrayit sarraly<sup>2</sup> and well ;  
 And at their back, some dele ner hand,  
 He saw the tother followand  
 Their bassines burnyst all bright,  
 Against the sun gleaming of light ;  
 Their speris, pennon and their shields,  
 Of light illumined all the fields  
 There best<sup>3</sup> and browdyn<sup>4</sup> wer bright baneris,  
 And horses hewyt on ser<sup>5</sup> maneris ;  
 And coat armoris of ser colouris,  
 And hauberks that were bright as fleuris,  
 Made them gletirand, as they war lik  
 Till angels high of heavens ryk.

Many such little pieces of description relieve the monotony of the continual fighting, and the amiable poet is evidently well pleased when he can contrive to bring in the sun, or birds, or flowers. In one place he diversifies his narrative with a little disquisition on astrology and necromancy, evincing much good sense. In another Douglas is represented as enforcing a particular course of action by an apologue of a fox :

A fisher whilom lay  
 Beside a river, for to get  
 His nettis that he had there set.  
 A little lodge thereby he made ;  
 And there within a bed he had ;  
 And a little fire also.  
 A door there was from outhen mo,  
 Aright his nettis for to see,  
 He rose ; and there well long dwelt he,  
 And, when he had done his deed,  
 Towart his lodge agayn he yeid,  
 And, with light of the little fire  
 That in the lodge was brennand schyr,  
 In till his lodge a fox he saw  
 That fast on ane salmound gar gnaw,  
 Than till the door he went in by,  
 And said, " Reiver, thou mon herout."  
 The fox, that was in full great doubt,  
 Lookèd about some hole to see ;  
 But none escher<sup>6</sup> perceive could he,  
 But where the man stood sturdily,  
 A lauchtand<sup>7</sup> mantle ther him by,  
 Lying upon the bed, he saw ;  
 And with his teeth he gan it draw  
 Out on the fire : and when the man  
 Saw his mantill lie brennand than  
 To red<sup>8</sup> it he ran hastily.

<sup>1</sup> Troops.  
<sup>6</sup> Varied.

<sup>2</sup> Compactly.  
<sup>6</sup> Issue.

<sup>3</sup> Fluttering.  
<sup>7</sup> Cloth.

<sup>4</sup> Embroidered.  
<sup>8</sup> Save.

The fox gat out then in great hy ;<sup>1</sup>  
 And held his way his warend<sup>2</sup> till.  
 The man leyt<sup>3</sup> him begylet ill,  
 That he his good salmound had tynt,  
 And also had his mantle brint.

Barbour is manifestly an adept at telling a plain story in plain words. The germ of Scott's metrical romances is in his *Bruce*, but on comparing the execution we perceive not merely the difference in genius between the poets, but the advance in the culture and the demands of readers. The *Bruce* is the most veracious of epics ; the poet has manifestly good authority for every incident, and could, if called upon, give chapter and verse for every line. So matter of fact a treatment would be intolerable in modern days. *The Legends of the Saints* is precisely in the manner of the *Bruce*, and if it be not Barbour's must proceed from some very close imitator. If, as we believe, it is his, it is of interest as showing that he had sufficient mental flexibility to interest himself in a great variety of subjects, and that his poetical output was not limited to descriptions of battles. No kind of incident comes amiss to him, and he always does his subject justice, and no more. *Par negotiis neque supra*. The translated romances of *Trov* and *Alexander* equally illustrate his fluency, his businesslike method of procedure, and his patience.

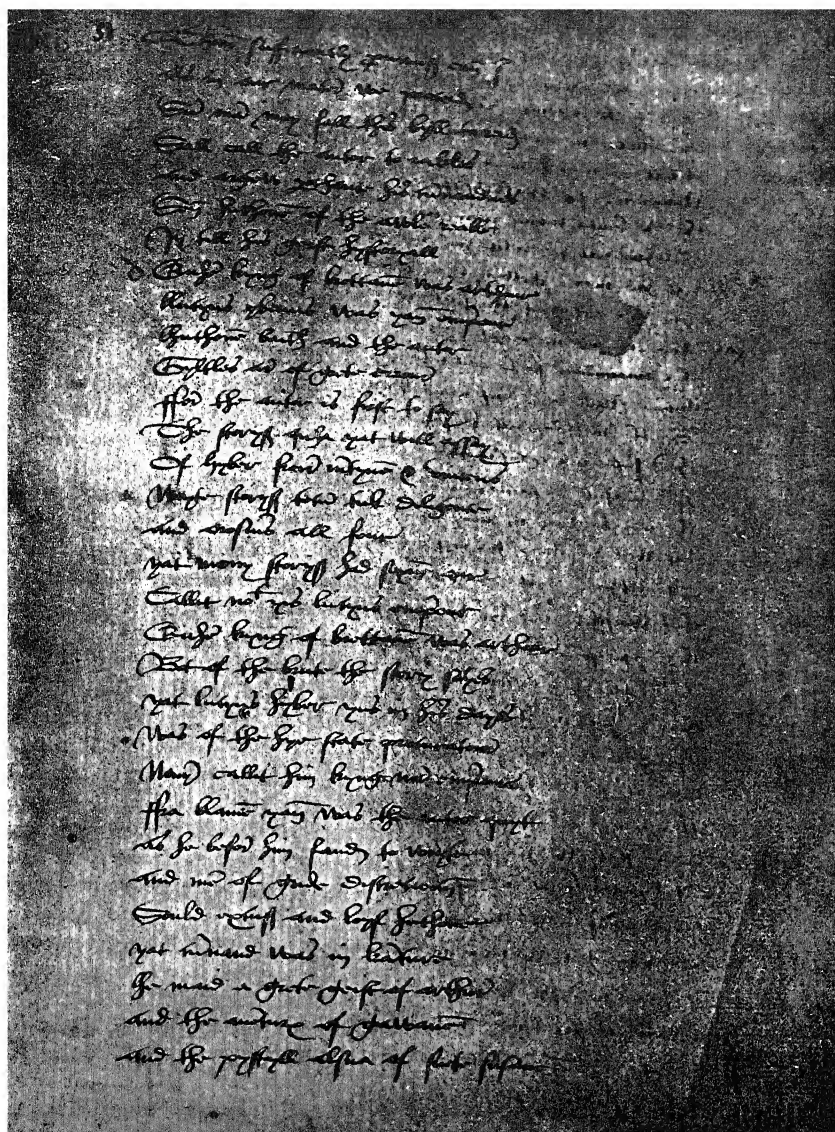
*Huchown of  
the Awle  
Ryale*

We now arrive at a literary problem of considerable difficulty, the authorship of the various poems which have been attributed to HUCHOWN OF THE AWLE RYALE (*Aula Regia*), and the identity of this person. Dunbar, in his *Lament for the Makaris*, mentions "the gude SIR HEW OF EGLINTOUN," as a deceased Scottish poet. There is no further account of him under this appellation, but Andrew Wyntoun, about 1420, speaks of *Huchown* (Hughie) as the author of *The Great Gest of Arthure*, *The Aventires of Gawane*, and *The Pystill of Swete Susan*. The last named poem is extant under this title, and the other two have been plausibly identified with *The Morte Arthure* and *The Aventires of Arthure*, alliterative romances which, as well as the *Pystill*, have been printed. There are difficulties in the way : Eglintoun's life, so far as known to us, scarcely seems that of a poet. He was brother-in-law to Robert the Steward, afterwards King of Scotland ; was in his youth made prisoner in an unfortunate foray into England ; was afterwards employed on important missions to England and France, became an auditor of the exchequer, and died in 1376 or 1377 in high favour with King Robert. It is strange that such a cloud of obscurity should rest upon the works of one so eminently placed ; it is certain, nevertheless, that Sir Hugh did write poetry, and that if the *Huchown* poems are not his, his works are not only obscure but irrecoverable. It is further certain that the poet mentioned by Wyntoun was a Scotchman, which disarms the objection, at first sight so formidable, that the poems are not in the Scottish dialect, and exhibit no trace of Scotch feeling. Endeavours, however, have been made to claim a much more extensive and important activity for Huchown, attributing to him *Sir Gawain* and *The Green Knight*,

<sup>1</sup> Haste.

<sup>2</sup> Earth

<sup>3</sup> Reckoned



A page from Wyntoun's "Chronicle of Scotland" (circa 1420), concerning "Huchown of the Awle Ryale" and his "Great Gest of Arthure"

From a MS. in the possession of Mr. J. Ferguson of Duns

*The Pearl* and its companion pieces, alliterative translations of the French metrical romances of *Troy* and *Alexander*, and other poems. Mr. George Neilson, the spirited and ingenious advocate of this view, has indeed shown that passages from *Gawain* and *Titus and Vespasian*, and from the translations which occur with such frequency in the anonymous poem entitled *The Parliament of the Three Ages* as to justify the belief that the same poet was the author of all the five pieces. To prove his identity with *Huchown*, however, it must be shown that he was also the author of the poems attributed to this writer by Wyntoun; and although Mr. Neilson adduces parallel passages from the *Mort Arthure* in support of his case, they seem to us insufficient to establish it: so that evidence is least forthcoming where it is most wanted. The problem is still far from a solution. The general resemblance of all the poems in alliterative verse that have been claimed for *Huchown* is unquestionable, but it is a fair subject for enquiry how far this may be due to the identity of metre. It might be difficult to distinguish at the present day between the work of two good poets writing on kindred themes in the metre of *In Memoriam*. For the present, perhaps, it may be safest to ascribe the poems mentioned by Wyntoun to Sir Hugh of Eglintoun; *Gawain*, the *Parliament*, *Vespasian* and the translations to an unknown writer; and *Pearl* and its satellites to yet another, though there is no great improbability in their proceeding from the author of *Gawain*. Of the remaining poems of the *Huchown* group *Wynners and Wastours* may be by him. *Golagros and Gawain* is generally ascribed to Clerk of Tranent, and *Erkenwald* is of quite uncertain authorship. The date of most falls between 1350 and 1375. All are written in some North of England dialect, and but for Wyntoun no one would have attributed any of them to a Scottish writer. The apparent adumbration of the institution of the Order of the Garter in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* renders it probable that the author lived at the court of Edward the Third, and is unfavourable to his Scottish origin. The composition is always respectable, but it is only in *Sir Gawain* and *Pearl* with its companions, all noticed in a preceding chapter, that the author or authors exhibit deep poetical feeling, while they evince much descriptive power, and are upborne throughout by a pervading dignity of expression, due in a measure to the crabbedness of their metre, which may be compared to a stiff brocaded suit difficult to put on or wear with grace, but which at all events constrains the wearer to hold himself erect. This, however, is very far from applying to *The P. still of Susann*, a poem on the story of Susanna and the Elders, which, unfortunately for Sir Hugh of Eglintoun's claim to better poems, is the one of the three which may be most confidently attributed to him, the identification of the other two with any extant work of his being uncertain. It hardly seems the composition that might have been expected from the author of *Sir Gawain* or of *Pearl*.

Andrew  
Wyntoun

About 1422 ANDREW WYNTOUN, canon of St. Andrews, and Prior of St. Serfe, composed a metrical chronicle, to which he gave the title of original, because it began with the origin of the world. Happily he condescended to occupy himself principally with the affairs of Scotland, and as

ordynge that al loss and dore  
lyfemyth and I shall you tell  
By old dayes what amytres were  
Amonge ome eldys yet by felle  
In Arthurs dayes that noble kynge  
By felle amytres forle fole  
And I shall telle of thers endynge  
That myght wote of we and hole  
The knyghts of the table round  
The sangysle when they had fonght  
Amytres that they by fore them found  
Ffynghid and to endy brought  
Ther onenys they botte a lundy  
For gold on hyf they leste them noight  
Ffowes yere they lyved found  
When they had thes weyhs weyght  
Filles on atyme f it by felle  
The kynge in body by the quene  
Off amytres they by game to telle  
Many that in p<sup>r</sup> land had bene  
Or yf that it were yowes wille  
Of a wonder thynge I wold you mene  
How yow coure by gymyng to fyll  
Off doughter knyghts all by done  
Byr yow<sup>r</sup> hene by gymyng to falle  
That went was wids in world to fpede  
Off luncelott and of othar all  
That ony so doughter were in dede  
Dand thers to thy counsell I calle  
What were lost for such a anede

respects these his work is of considerable historical value. It has no poetical recommendation, except a manly strenuousness of expression. The author cannot invent or embellish, but a good story does not lose in his hands. His pithy style is well illustrated by his account of the vision of Macbeth:

A night he thought in his dreaming  
That sitting he was beside the king  
At a seat in hunting, so  
In a leash he had grey-hounds two.  
He thought while he was so sitting  
He saw three women by ganging :  
And those women well thought he  
The weird sisters most like to be.  
The first he heard say ganging by,  
"Lo, yonder the Thane of Cromarty!"  
The other woman said again,  
"Of Moray yonder I see the Thane!"  
The third then said, "I see the King!"  
All this he heard in his dreaming.

Macbeth's crime does not prevent the poet from rendering him justice as good ruler:

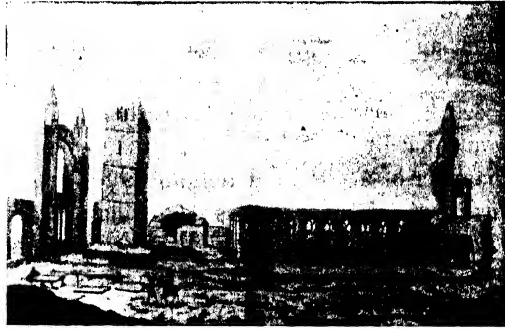
Seventeen winters full regnand,  
As King he was in ull Scotland.  
All his time was great plenty  
Abounding both in land and sea.  
He was in justice right lawful,  
And to his lieges all awful.  
When Leo X [IX] was Pope of Rome,  
As pilgrim to the court he come;  
And in his alms he sent silver  
To all poor folk that had myser :<sup>1</sup>  
And all time used he to work  
Profitably for Holy Kirk.

*James the First  
of Scotland*

Nearly at the same time as Wyntoun wrote, the literature of Scotland, according at least to the general belief, was enriched with a much more important poem. Kings have frequently distinguished themselves in prose authorship, but have so rarely excelled in poetry that if JAMES THE FIRST OF SCOTLAND be indeed the author of *The Kingis Quair* (*Quire-book*) he may perhaps claim the second place in royal song after David. The interest of the poetry would be still further enhanced by the romantic circumstances of the monarch's life. Born in 1394, he was sent to France for his education in 1406, but his ship was taken by the English, then at war with Scotland, and he spent eighteen years in captivity in England, receiving however ample means of support and an excellent bringing up, and twice accompanying Henry V. in expeditions against France. He had become King of Scotland by his father's death shortly after his captivity, and his ambitious uncle, the Regent Albany, probably took no steps to hasten his return. In 1424, after the deaths of Albany and Henry V., James was ransomed, and returned to Scotland,



bringing with him an English bride, daughter of the Earl of Somerset. His wooing is supposed to be the subject of *The Kingis Quair*, which, if his, cannot well be of later date. Upon his return he threw himself into public business, proved himself an efficient legislator by the number of excellent laws which he caused to be enacted, and a ruthless antagonist by the destruction of the disaffected house of Albany. Like all the able sovereigns of his age, he made it his principal object to beat down the great nobles by the aid of the petty barons, the people and the clergy. This policy was carried out with great success until the catastrophe which terminated his life in 1437, a tragedy made additionally memorable by the heroism of Catherine Douglas, and the grand ballad epic of Rossetti.



The ruins of St. Andrew's Cathedral  
From Slezer's "*Theatrum Scotiae*," 1693



James I. of Scotland

From "*Inscriptiones Historicae Regum Scotorum*," 1602

with the poetical gift, he might very well write, but which might also furnish an attractive theme for another poet. The authorship is most distinctly claimed for him, his captivity and imprisonment in England being related as actual experiences of the author's; but this only proves that the poem was intended

It is difficult absolutely to determine the authorship of *The Kingis Quair*, inasmuch as we lack sufficient materials for deciding whether James was or was not by poetic temperament and literary skill capable of the composition of so fine a work. A few private letters, a few characteristic anecdotes, might guide us, but these are not forthcoming. Though other poems have been published as the work of James, only one of them can be his; and this is too short and insignificant to afford any clue to the extent of his poetical powers. The subject, his romantic attachment in captivity to the lady who subsequently became his queen, is one upon which, supposing him endowed

"*The Kingis Quair*"

to pass for his. The internal evidence, however, alleged against the poem's authenticity seems very weak ; and the external testimony, though late, when it does come is clear and decided. It is certainly surprising that there should be no evidence of the existence of a poem of such merit by so illustrious an author for sixty years after the period at which, if genuine, it must have been written, and it would seem no unfair inference that it was composed by some later minstrel in the character of the King. Yet the fraud would hardly have been attempted if the King did not already enjoy the character of a poet, and nothing but *The Kingis Quair* appears upon which this character could be based. It may be added that the peculiar character of the diction, a mixture of the Northern and the Southern dialects, is such as might be expected from a Scotchman long resident in England. On the whole, the literary historian will at present see no sufficient reason for erasing King James's name from the roll of poets. If he was the author, it will be possible to concur with Professor Skeat in attributing to him the pseudo-Chaucerian second part of the *Romaunt of the Rose*, written in a very similar dialect.

Whoever the author, *The Kingis Quair* is a great advance upon all preceding Scotch poetry. The new departure, however, is in no respect national, but arises from the poet's subjection to English influences, and the affection for Chaucer and Gower which he acknowledges with touching warmth :

Unto ympenis<sup>1</sup> of my maisteres dere,  
Gowere and Chaucere that on the steppes sat  
Of rhetorike, quhill they were living here,  
Superlative as poets laureate,  
In moraltye and eloquence ornat,  
I recommend my book in linis seven,  
And eke their souls unto the bliss of heaven.

The poem belongs, like Lydgate's better productions, and *The Flower and the Leaf*, to the Chaucerian school then flourishing, which may be compared to the Tennysonian school of our own age. Chaucer, like Tennyson, had set a pattern of excellence not to be rivalled without an entirely new departure, of which the unimaginative fifteenth century was incapable. Nor did the talent of the poets of the age, until we come to Henryson, in any way qualify them to emulate Chaucer's style in the later *Canterbury Tales* ; they consequently wrote in the manner of *Troilus and Cryseide*, and approved themselves, if not masters, very worthy scholars. Like *The Flower and the Leaf*, *The Kingis Quair* is a kind of allegorical vision, not unlike the nearly contemporary *Quadriregio* of the Italian poet Frezzi. The lover finds himself successively in the realms of Venus, Minerva and Fortune, but all ends well. It is a charming poem, elegant in diction, melodious in versification, inspired by true feeling, and full of beautiful descriptive passages, of which the following may serve as an example :

<sup>1</sup> Hymns



Æneas Silvius (afterwards Pope Pius II.) before James I. of Scotland

*After the picture by Pintoricchio*

Now there was made fast by the tower's wall  
 A garden fair, and in the corners set  
 An arbour green, with wandis long and small  
 Railed about, and so with trées set  
 Was all the place, and hawthorn hedges knet,  
 That lyfe was none walking there forby,  
 That might within scarce any wight espy.

So thick the bewys<sup>1</sup> and the levès green  
 Beschedit all the alleys that there were ;  
 And middis every arbour might be seen  
 The sharpè swetè grenè junipere,  
 Growing so fair with branches here and there  
 That, as it seemed to a lyf without,  
 The bewys spread the arbour all about.

And on the smale grene tuftis<sup>2</sup> sat  
 The little swetè nightingale, and sang  
 So loud and clear, the ympnis<sup>3</sup> consecrat  
 Of Lufis use, now soft, now loud among,  
 That all the garden and the wallis rong  
 Right of their song, and on the copill<sup>4</sup> next  
 Of their sweet harmony, and lo the text.

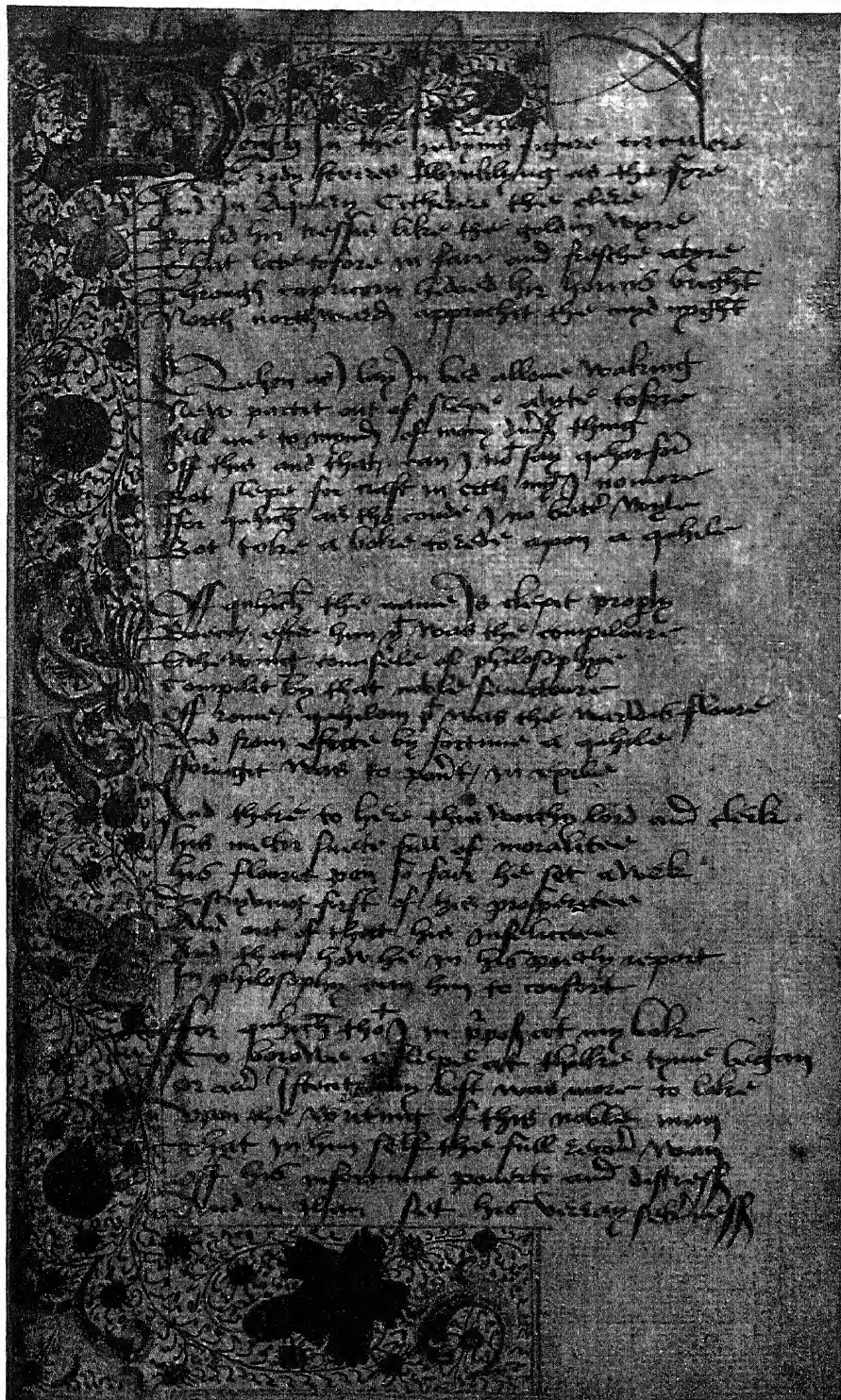
"Worship ye, that loveris bene, this May,  
 For of your bliss the kalends are begun,  
 And sing with us, away winter, away !  
 Come, summer, come, the sweet season and sun ;  
 Awake for shame, that have your heavens won,  
 And amorously lift up your heades all,  
 Thank Love that list you to his merry call."

When they this song had sung a litle thraw,  
 They stent awhile, and therewith unafraid  
 As I beheld and cast mine eyne a-lawe,  
 From bough to bough they hoppèd and they played,  
 And freshly in their birdis kinde arrayed  
 Their feathers new, and fret them on the sun,  
 And thankèd Love that had their matis won.

It is an additional argument in favour of James's authorship of *The Kingis Quair* that poetry flourished greatly during his reign.

How literary [says Mr. G. Neilson in *Scottish History and Art*, p. ix. 1902] the Court of King James was may be surmised not only from chronicles, but also from the probably correct ascription to his confessor David Rate [see Mr. J. T. Brown's article in the *Scottish Antiquary* for April 1897] of a variety of poems. The processes of identification are slender, yet in harmony with facts. What somewhat heightens the interest of this is a possible companion identification not hitherto advanced. Two obscure "makaris" named by Dunbar in his *Lament* were Roull of Aberdeen and Roull of Corstorphin. If the words "Quod Rate" imply that the poetic utterance was that of David Rate, confessor of King James, one of the Roulls may well have been Master Thomas Roull, clerk and chaplain of the same monarch. The propositions for a missing Christian name in each case are equally legitimate, although the proofs for each are equally incomplete. They are on the lines of the general fact that in the fifteenth century the official circles of the Court were literary. Among the "makaris" mourned by Dunbar, Quintin Schaw was a Court

<sup>1</sup> Boughs<sup>2</sup> Twigs<sup>3</sup> Hymns<sup>4</sup> Couplet

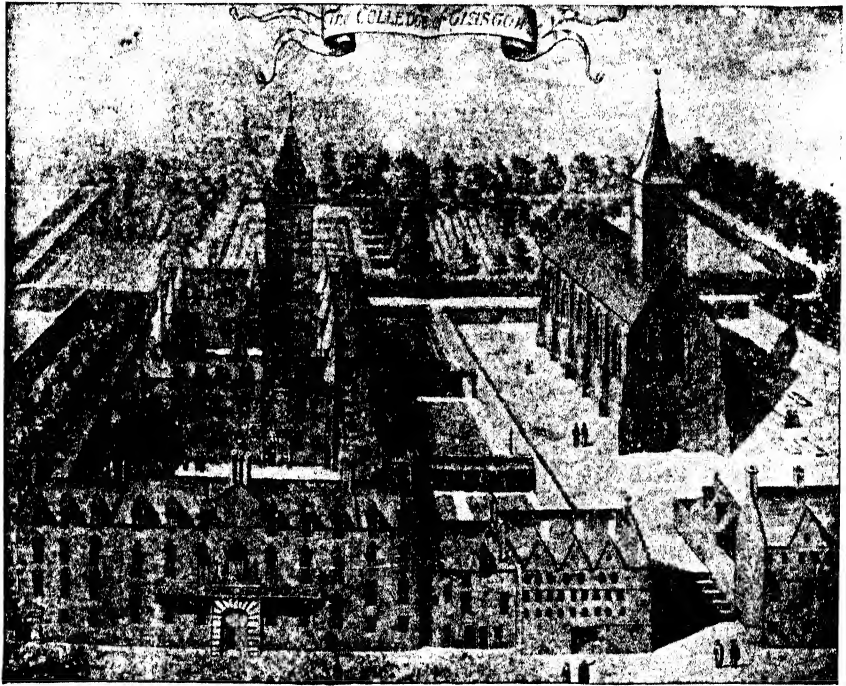


A page from the "Kingis Quair"

From the MS. in the Bodleian Library

dependent; Reid or "Stobo," was the clerk successively of James II. and James III.; and Patrick Johnstone was a Court player.

A hundred years passed away after the *Bruce* of Barbour, before the other great national hero of Scotland found a poet, but at last BLIND HARRY, or HENRY THE MINSTREL, arose to sing the deeds of William Wallace. Of Harry's life we know little more than what is told in the succeeding century by the historian Major, who informs us that he wrote during his, Major's, infancy, which would fall between 1470 and 1480. He adds that the minstrel collected the popular traditions respecting Wallace, and "by reciting them



Glasgow University

From Slezer's "*Theatrum Scotiae*," 1693

before the nobles received food and clothing, of which he was worthy." He was, therefore, a rhapsodist, and Homeric in other particulars than his blindness, but treasury accounts show that he afterwards received a stipend from the King, which ceases in 1492. There is no doubt of his privation of sight, but the evidences of culture in his poems, including traces of Chaucer, indicate that before his affliction he must have employed his eyes in study. According to his own statement, indeed, his poem is mainly founded upon a Latin biography of Wallace, now lost, by his chaplain, John or Arnold Blair.

Blind Harry's theory and practice of poetry resemble Barbour's. Both may be described as pragmatical poets, they have a distinct notion of what they have to say, and set to work to impart it in a thoroughly business-like style, neither omitting anything that a prose historian would have regarded as

essential, nor inserting much that he would have deemed superfluous. The blind minstrel has the advantage of a superior poetical form in his heroic couplet, which tempts much less to diffuseness than Barbour's octosyllabics. On the other hand, Barbour is the better poet, with a more vivid gift of description, and occasional glimpses of fancy and feeling which rarely visit Blind Harry. The Wallace epic, nevertheless, from its very rudeness produces the deceptive impression of a more primitive composition, and, especially in the modernised version published early in the eighteenth century, has had a very powerful influence in fostering Scottish national feeling; but this is less due to the merit of the poet than to the surpassing interest and patriotic colouring of his story. Had this been rewritten in the following century by a poet of genius, the world would have had one great national epic the more.

A good example of Blind Harry's habitual manner, and his strong and weak points when grappling with a really stirring theme, is his treatment of the appalling legend of Fawdoun. Wallace has struck off Fawdoun's head for his treachery, and is spending the night in the lone tower of Gask, when a terrific blast upon the horn is heard outside. He sends his companions in successive pairs to investigate the cause, none return. At length he goes himself:

Syn forth he went where that he heard the horn.  
 Without the door Fawdoun was him beforne,  
 As till his sight, his own head in his hand;  
 A cross he made, when he saw him so stand  
 At Wallace in the head he swakit<sup>1</sup> there,  
 And he in haste soon hynt<sup>2</sup> it by the hair  
 Syne out again at him he couthit<sup>3</sup> cast;  
 In till his heart he was greatly aghast  
 Right well he trowit that was no spirit of man  
 It was some devil that sic malice began  
 He wyst no waill<sup>4</sup> there longer for to bide,  
 Up through the hall thus wight Wallace can glide  
 Till a close stair, the burdis raiff in twain  
 Fifteen foot large he leapt out of that inn.<sup>5</sup>  
 Up the watyr sodainely he couthe fare.  
 Again he blent<sup>6</sup> what perance<sup>7</sup> he saw there.  
 Him thought he saw Fawdoun that hugely sere;  
 That haill hall he had set into a fire;  
 A great rafter he had intill his hand.  
 Wallace as then no longer would he stand.

There are elements of grandeur in this description, but it is far inferior to the simple prose narrative of Sir Walter Scott in the notes to the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*.

Of the life of ROBERT HENRYSON, one of the best of the old Scotch poets, hardly anything is known beyond the fact that he was admitted a member of the University of Glasgow in 1462, being then possessed of degrees which he had probably gained at some foreign university. The piety and morality of

*Robert  
Henryson*

<sup>1</sup> Hurl'd.    <sup>2</sup> Caught.    <sup>3</sup> Did.    <sup>4</sup> Choice.    <sup>5</sup> House.    <sup>6</sup> Peeped    <sup>7</sup> Appearance.



his writings bespeak the clergyman. He would also seem to have been notary and schoolmaster ; and gives in general the impression of a man of parts and spirit, mingling freely with all classes of society. He is moreover an excellent poet. Although none of his poems may be quite on a level with *The Kingis Quair*, he surpasses his royal predecessor in versatility of theme and

**The Testament of  
CRESSEID,**

Compyllit be M. Robert  
Henryson, Sculemai-  
ster in Dunfer-  
meling.



**Imprinted at Edin-  
burgh be Henric Charteris.**

M. D. X CIII.

Title-page of Henryson's  
"Testament of Cresseid"

style. He has two special claims to distinction, as one of the best representatives of the Chaucerian school ; and as the first true lyrical poet that Scotland ever had, the precursor of the rich growth of popular song to come. The most important of his direct Chaucerian imitations are the poems on Orpheus and Eurydice, which he almost apologises for undertaking, "for in my life I could ne'er sing a note," and *The Testament of Cresseid*, the moving tale of Cressida's leprosy, which is told with much pathos. Of all the followers of Chaucer, Henryson is the only one who shows any ability to reproduce the Chaucerian humour. This is mainly evinced in his fables after Aesop ; which indeed, deficient as they are in terseness, rather anticipate the manner of La Fontaine than reproduce that of Aesop, but which, if regarded as easy familiar narratives, deserve the highest commendation. Their chief characteristic is humour, as when the fox makes his confession to the wolf :—

Secing the Wolf, the wily traitor Tod  
On knees fell, with head into his neck :  
"Welcome, my father ghostliest under God,"  
Quoth he, with many a linge and many a beck.  
"Ha !" quoth the Wolf, "Sir Tod, for what effek  
Makye so feir? ryse up, put on your weede,"  
"Father," quoth he, "I have great cause to drede.

Ye are mirrour, lanterne, and sickerway  
Should guide such simple folk as me to grace  
Your bare feet, and your russet cowl of grey,  
Your lean cheekes, your pail piteous face  
Showis to me your perfect holiness,  
For well were him that ans in his life  
Had hap to you his sinnis for to shrive."

"Na, silly Laurence," quoth the Wolf, and leuch  
"It pleases me that ye are penitent."  
"Of reif<sup>1</sup> and sleuth,<sup>2</sup> Sir, I can tell aneuch,  
That causes me full sair for to repent.  
But Father, bide still here upon the bent,  
I you beseech, and hear me to declare  
My conscience that prickis me so sair."

It appears, however, that the fox's principal motive for penitence is that "I

<sup>1</sup> Robbery.

<sup>2</sup> Slaughter.



haif slane so few," which does not hinder his receiving absolution on condition of abstaining from animal food until Easter, except in case of great necessity, of which he is to be the judge. In the same spirit of sympathy with the wrongs of the poor, the Bear and the Badger are represented as trying a cause between the dog and the sheep, whose issue is a foregone conclusion, notwithstanding the painful zeal of the judges and their profound respect for precedent :—

The Bear, the Brock, the matter took  
in hand

For to decide if this exception  
Was of no strength, or lawfully might  
stand,

And thereupon, as judges, they sat  
down

And held a long while disputation,  
Seeking full many decretes of the law,  
And glosses els, the verity to know.

This solemn but cutting irony  
is quite in the style of Krilov.  
*The Preaching of the Swallow* is  
in a higher strain, and in parts  
rises into eloquence.

As a lyrist, apart even from  
the admirable feeling of his  
verses, Henryson claims high  
rank for his simple spontaneous  
melody. The following are the  
first two stanzas of *The Abbey  
Walk* :—

Alone as I went up and down  
In ane Abbey was fair to see,  
Thinking what consolation  
Was best in to adversity ;

On caise<sup>1</sup> I cast on side myne eye,  
And saw this written upon a wall  
Of what estate man, that thou be,  
Obey, and thank thy God of all.

Thy kingdom and thy great empire,  
Thy royalty nor rich array  
Shall not endure at thy desire,  
But as the wind will wend away.

Perhaps the most important of Henryson's performances is the lyrical pastoral of *Robin and Makyne*, not so much for its own merit, though this is great, than as the first revelation of the vast material for popular poetry



## The taill of the Lok and the Jasp



**A**ne cok sum tyme with feddum fowls  
Hecht out and sang, althow he was but new  
fledt forth from the dung-hill since he day  
To get his dinner for his all his care  
Correspond among the ay, be evermore  
For find ane Jasp Jasp such precious  
Was cusem forth be sleeping of the house

"The Tail of the Cok and the Jasp." From a  
MS. of Henryson's Fables

British Museum, Harl. MS. 3865

Thy gold, and all thy gudès gay  
When Fortune list will fra thee fall ;  
Sin thou such samples sees each day :  
Obey, and thank thy God of all.

in Scotch rural life. It is the old story of cross purposes. Makyne loves Robin, Robin is indifferent. Makyne becomes desperate, lays open siege to him; Robin repels her. Makyne renounces him; Robin, piqued into love, strives to regain her, but only to discover that

The man that will nocht whan he may,  
Sall have nocht quhen he wald.

The spirit and melody of the entire composition may be estimated by the last stanza :—

Makyne went hame blyth anneuche  
Attour the holtis hair ;<sup>1</sup>  
Robene murnit, and Makyne leuch ;  
She sang, he sighèd sair :  
And so left him baith wo and wreuch<sup>2</sup>  
In dolour and in care,  
Keeping his hird under a huche<sup>3</sup>  
Amang the holtis hair.

Henryson is a Janus, who with one aspect looks back to Chaucer, and

with the other forward to Burns and Allan Ramsay. In the latter respect he for long stands alone; otherwise there is no breach of continuity between him and the two important poets who immediately succeed, Gavin Douglas and William Dunbar. Having, however, arrived at the brink of the great transformation in literature about to be effected by the printing-press, we suspend the review of Scotch poetry in its purely literary form, and turn to the popular poetry which, both in Scotland and England, had been growing up side by side with it, and which took rank as an element in the literature of these countries towards the end of the fifteenth century.

About the period of our history at which we have arrived, the ballad begins to pass from the lips of the people into literature. *A Little Geste of Robin Hood* was printed by Wyn-



James II. of Scotland

From "*Inscriptiones Historice Regum Scotorum*," 1602

kyn de Worde about 1495, but had no doubt been recited long before; and in general the fifteenth century may be regarded as the period when the ballad first took literary form. At the same time almost all the best examples are of later date, and it will not be possible to illustrate ballad poetry by such examples

<sup>1</sup> Across the grey hills.

<sup>2</sup> Wretched.

<sup>3</sup> Bank.

as the plan of our work requires without trespassing on the productions of a subsequent period. It seems best, nevertheless, to treat the general question of the origin of the ballad and its relation to other forms of poetry in this place, even though this should involve citations from the work of a later age, to whose productions an opportunity for recurring will be found.

The genesis of the ballad has of late been the subject of much controversy.

For ages the question, as well as everything else connected with popular literature, was deemed unworthy of the attention of men of letters. Synesius tells us that in Africa he listened at night to the folk tales of the Libyan huntsmen, but he has not preserved a word of them. He was a good writer for his time, but all he wrote would now be deemed a cheap ransom for those neglected stories. By the mere force of reaction, the dry and prosaic eighteenth century first awoke to a perception of the charm and significance of popular song and legend. Men found in these the satisfaction of a need of which they had become conscious; but which, bound as they still were in the fetters of artificial diction and conventional modes of thought,

they were not of themselves yet able to gratify. The revival which Percy and Warton inaugurated in England, and Herder and Bürger followed up in Germany, had been prefigured by the saying of Fletcher of Saltoun about the beginning of the century, "Let me make the songs of the people and I care not who makes their laws." The saying was perhaps not quite so wise as it seems, for the essential condition of worth in the songs of a people is that they should be made by the people, and if Fletcher of Saltoun had made them the virtue would have gone out of them. But it correctly expresses the general feeling of the eighteenth, and until a late period of the nineteenth, century, that popular songs and ballads must be conceived as the work of the people itself. Of late a reaction has set in against this view. "So far," says Mr. Courthope, "from the ballad being a spontaneous production of popular imagination, it was a type of poem adapted by

**These begynneth a lytell geste of Ro-  
byn hode** 



"A Lytell Geste of Robin Hode," printed by  
Wynkyn de Worde

*From the copy in the University Library, Cambridge*

the professors of the declining art of minstrelsy from the romances once in favour with the educated classes. Everything in the ballad—matter, form, composition—is the work of the minstrel ; all that the people do is to remember and repeat what the minstrel has put together.” “The ballad,” says Mr. Gregory Smith, “is not æsthetically a popular *genre*. It is a literary product both in matter and structure.”

We shall best solve the problem of the genesis of the ballad poetry by a consideration of similar phenomena in other ages and countries. The result may be to convince us that the truth lies between the views of the eighteenth and those of the later nineteenth century. That the people can and does write poetry for itself is indisputable. We have the rude songs with which the Roman soldiers celebrated the triumphs of Cæsar and Aurelian, manifestly not the production of any court poet. The memory of Brian Boru's great victory over the Danes on St. Stephen's Day survives in Ireland in a carol about a wren, evidently not the composition of any professional minstrel. But there is nothing to prevent the poet from dignifying and embellishing what has come spontaneously to the lips of the common man ; and in so doing he affords material for future generations to deal with him in like manner. It is difficult to demonstrate the existence of popular ballads in their most primitive forms, as such rudimentary attempts are necessarily obliterated by the more refined versions. There are, however, many instances of the early forms of ballads, if not actually in the first stage, yet probably at but one or two removes from it. *The Abbot of Canterbury*, in the form now accepted, is a gem of humorous ballad narration ; the more primitive version in the *Percy Ballads* (“King John and the Bishop”) is too uncouth to be read with any pleasure. Yet without this rude draft the masterpiece would not have existed ; and the draft supposes a pre-existing story, probably derived from a French *fabliau* based in its turn upon some venerable tradition. It would hence appear that the truth lies between the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century theories of popular ballad poetry ; but that the eighteenth century was fully justified in attaching great importance to its discovery ; for, however the original ballads may have been worked over by succeeding poets, they did not on that account forfeit their native aroma or their originally popular character. *The Pervigilium Veneris* has all the air of an elaborate poem founded on the refrain of a ballad, but it is as well adapted for popular recitation as the original could have been. Peacock's “Bold Robin hath robed him in ghostly attire” is far superior in poetical merit to any of the old poems of the Robin Hood cycle, but it is not less a member of the cycle for that ; nor could it have been written save by a woodlander, one, like the “mountain maid” of his favourite Nonnus, ἐρημαδι σύντροφος ὕλη<sup>1</sup>. If, however, Robin Hood had not provided the matter, neither Peacock nor the earlier minstrels would have provided the verse. It is the chief error of Mr. Courthope and Mr. Gregory Smith to suppose that the minstrel originated the matter of the lay. Scarcely an instance can be produced where he did not work upon some tradition like Whittington's Cat, some

<sup>1</sup> “Twin-nurtured with the solitary wood.”

is more ancient  
a very different  
from the printed  
copy: contains  
nearly the quan-  
tity.

In my own collection, the song, the the the of Cont. h

• Khe, Bp.  
con

thing

Then

An ancient story I have told you  
of a notable yong of France called King  
in England was bounde w<sup>th</sup> many & w<sup>th</sup> myght  
his Dimes & wrong & uncounted lile wote  
this Noble yong was bounde in bondage  
for he was angry w<sup>th</sup> the Bishopp of murtherours  
For his house keeping & his good there  
he rode yett for him as yo<sup>r</sup> shall here  
to go do no more this story tellie  
He & sayd the Bishopp had a better house than he  
a 100 men more w<sup>th</sup> the day  
The Bishopp kept in his house every day  
250 gold shawys w<sup>th</sup> out any doubt  
inbed w<sup>th</sup> water waited the Bishopp about  
the Bishopp he came to the town anon  
before his yong of was called L. John  
as soon as the Bishopp the L. did see  
Ogh the L. Bishopp toward welcome to your  
there was no man for welcome to come  
as thou of word treason against my towns  
my love q<sup>d</sup> the Bishopp I would if you become  
I know yo<sup>r</sup> great nothing but if of my own  
I trust yo<sup>r</sup> great will doe us no harm  
for giving my own best godson  
yo<sup>r</sup> q<sup>d</sup> the L. Bishopp thou must wote Oye  
etough thou can answer two questions I  
thy bad flatterer fustion quite friendly body  
& all thy living w<sup>th</sup> me into new  
first q<sup>d</sup> the L. tell me in this stonde  
w<sup>th</sup> this crown of gold keepes by on my head  
amongst my Nobility w<sup>th</sup> Joy & unity fustion  
but we know w<sup>th</sup> in our yonger what I am worth  
forondly tell me w<sup>th</sup> out any doubt  
how long I may live the while we are about  
& thirdly tell me or w<sup>th</sup> I strike  
what is the Bishopp of I doo think  
20 day or garden I should have vndergo  
& thus againe & answer me  
the Bishopp said the L. might at a word  
he rode thence Cambridge & oxford  
but now a Doctor there was for who  
told show him those questions or otherwise  
where the Bishopp was nothing gladd  
but in his heart was heavy & sad  
& hoped him come to a house in the town

contemporary occurrence like Flodden Field, or some old-world legend like "Glasgerien." The modern writers themselves emphasise this point by insisting on the ballad writers' obligations to the early metrical romances. This is true, but may be exaggerated. Several of the *Percy Ballads* really are romances, and not ballads at all. "The Boy and the Mantle," though seeming an adaptation of a romance, is probably a free version of a French *fabliau*. Yet many of the ballads may not unjustly be called the wreck of romances; but

### A ballade of the Scottyshe kynge.



**R**ynge Jampe/Jampe pour. Jore is all go  
 pe somnmed our kynge why dyde go  
 Co pou no then: it dyde accord  
 Co somnion our kynge pour souverayne losse

From John Skelton's "Balade of the Scottyshe  
 Kynge," 1513

men in every other respect. There must have been many such among rude nations in all ages. There is another class, like the Lancashire and Dorsetshire schoolmaster, John Collier ("Tim Bobbin") and William Barnes, men of superior education, who designedly bring themselves down to the popular level, but who are not the less rustic poets because it would have been within their power to have adopted another style of composition. While admitting, therefore, that too little was made of the direct literary element in Percy's time, we are disposed to think that too much is made of it now; and, paradoxical as it may seem, to adopt in apparently reversing Mr. Lang's conclusion that "whoever made the ballads, the populace remade them." It rather appears to us that the ballads were made by the people and remade by

this does not necessarily involve literary degradation. The form may be less intricate, the spirit may be more truly poetical. We have a parallel instance in the hymns of the Greek lyrists, such as Stesichorus and Bacchylides, on divine and heroic legends, which were no doubt adapted from episodes in the works of their predecessors the Cyclic poets.

It should also be considered that many of the writers and rewriters of ballads, though setting to work with deliberate purpose, were in all probability not persons of culture, but men of the people. Mr. Yeats has made us acquainted with the itinerant Irish poets, men whose poetical gifts have almost gained them the reputation of wizards, but on the level of their uneducated country-

the poets ; but, put it which way we will, the people remains the chief poet, while it must be admitted that the best poems are generally those in which men of culture have had the largest share.

Antiquarianism cannot well exist without antiquity, and, though it is great matter for regret, it is small matter for wonder that little literary interest was taken in our ancient ballads until the popular interest had become almost extinct. Some unknown person, probably in the reign of Charles I., thought enough of them to transcribe a great number into a folio volume ; and this volume, found by Thomas Percy in a bureau in a house at Shiffnal, about the middle of the eighteenth century, has alone stood between us and the loss of much of our ballad literature. How much may have perished it is impossible to say. Much of this literature, even by the time of the invention of printing, had become too much out of date to be perpetuated by the press in an age devoid of the antiquarian sentiment ; and tokens are not wanting that most of even the printed fugitive literature has perished. The speeches of Autolycus in the *Winter's Tale* show that in Shakespeare's time single-sheet ballads were a common article of traffic at fairs, and when the number of fairs is considered it is clear that the proportion preserved in the Roxburghe and similar collections, covering long periods as these do, can be but infinitesimal. In the reign of Elizabeth, the Spanish ambassador tells his master that pamphlets assailing the Pope and the King of Spain are hawked up and down the streets of London ; not one of these now survives. On the accession of Mary, a poem, written expressly to celebrate this event and the overthrow of Northumberland, was printed as a broadside for sale in the streets. Hundreds of this must have been circulated, but only one remains. Of sixty ballads entered for publication by one small publisher, William Pickering, only four can now be traced. The discovery of the Percy folio by a poet and an antiquary, just following its discovery by a servant who proposed to devote it to the service of Vulcan, is a memorable instance of the right book coming into the right hands at the right time.

**Thomas Percy**, Bishop of Dromore, was born at Bridgenorth in Shropshire in 1729. He claimed gentle blood on the strength of his name, which seems, however, to have been originally Piercy, and his immediate ancestors were certainly tradesmen. He gained an exhibition at the Grammar School, proceeded to Christ Church College, and in 1753 obtained the college living of Easton Maudit, Northamptonshire, where he had aristocratic parishioners, and his antiquarian tastes were fostered by the vicinity of the distinguished Anglo-Saxon scholar, Lye. It was probably about this time that he made the great discovery of his life, though we do not hear of it until he had experimented in translations from the Chinese through the medium of Portuguese and from the Icelandic. But in 1765 the *Reliques of Ancient Poetry* appeared, and made an era, not only in English, but in European literature, affording the date from which, upon the whole, the commencement of the Romantic School may most fitly be reckoned. Before its appearance, the mere announcement of its preparation had revealed the ripeness of the times. It is almost doubtful whether Percy would have ventured upon publication, at least so soon, but for the impulse he received from

Shenstone, a typical man of letters of the eighteenth century. Another characteristic figure, Thomas Warton, a pattern of the blended erudition and elegance that distinguish eighteenth-century scholarship at its best, ransacked the libraries of Oxford for him. He himself examined the Pepysian MSS. at Cambridge. Birch, Farmer, Grainger, Garrick, Goldsmith aided; and the editor, still not quite reassured on the subject of decorum, was able to hope that "the names of so many men of learning and character might serve as an amulet to guard him from every unfavourable censure for having bestowed any attention upon a parcel of old ballads." The excuse was hardly

R E L I Q U E S  
OF  
ANCIENT ENGLISH POETRY:

CONSISTING OF

Old Heroic BALLADS, SONGS, and of  
PIECES of our earlier POETS,

(Chiefly of the LYRIC kind.)

Together with some few of later Date.

VOLUME THE FIRST.



L O N D O N :

Printed for J. DODSLEY in Pall-Mall

M DCC LXV.

Title-page of first edition of Percy's  
"Reliques," 1765

of another copy. The standard texts of many popular (especially Scotch) ballads have been formed by Sir Walter Scott, whose combinations of the best features of several old versions into a single poem are so much superior to any of these taken separately that they must needs be accepted, even though the text had no existence before Scott. But neither had any of the versions he manipulated any better claim to authority than the rest. Percy merely treated his minstrels as they had treated each other. Writing, however, in the style of the eighteenth century, his re-handlings could not well be felicitous; but he would have fared still worse if he had essayed the method of Chatterton. His poetical instinct, also, must have been severely shocked by the occasional rudeness and prosiness of the ballads he was editing; many the work, at least in part, of true poets, but others composed or debased by mere village crowdiers. Not without a pang could an editor of poetical taste and feeling resign himself to print such a quatrain as this:

So Chester ever hath had since  
An earl when England had a prince

called for; the public seemed quite disposed to applaud in ancient writers what would have offended them in a modern. Johnson and Warburton, indeed, evinced some disposition to growl; but the former had a real kindness for Percy, and the latter was in this very year engaged in a controversy with Lowth, which can have left him little appetite for more. It must be admitted that Percy had done much—far too much—to propitiate the eighteenth century by deference to what was still the reigning taste in poetry. He dealt freely with his originals, both by addition and subtraction, and even inserted "a few modern attempts in the same kind of writing to atone for the rudeness of the more obsolete poems." Of these, Johnson spoke with just contempt. But Percy's patching of the old ballads is not altogether without excuse. Though many of the ballads in the folio are ancient texts, some are accommodated to the transcriber's own period, and there is no such thing as an authoritative text of any of them. Many have since Percy's time been found to exist in a number of discrepant versions; and, when the extant version is unique, it is certain that the text would be unsettled by the discovery



And whenas princes there'd be none,  
The profits to the crown have gone.

"Men with a turn for verse-writing," justly observes Percy's latest editors, "seem unable to resist the temptation of falsifying and forging old ballads." Neither, it may be retorted, are men of erudition able to resist the temptation of withdrawing the books they edit from the world at large by persistence in an obsolete and barbarous orthography. It is quite right that there should be one edition of the *Percy Ballads* to perpetuate the orthography of the original manuscript; but it may be hoped that one will suffice. Fortunately, the best of them, as well as the best, especially Scotch, that could be gathered from other sources may be read in a modernised form in the treasury brought together by the American professor, Francis Childs.

Percy rendered one more distinguished service to antiquarianism by his edition of *The Household Book of the Earl of Northumberland in 1512*, the first of the long line of similar publications which have so vividly illustrated the manners of past times, and so greatly influenced historical composition by showing how much more history may be than a mere record of events. His poem, "The Hermit of Warkworth," is only remarkable as an early example of English Romanticism. He became Bishop of Dromore in Ireland, and died in 1811.

The development of the ballad, as we have it in the Percy manuscript, may be traced along two lines—the song called forth by some contemporary event, usually political; and, to employ the happy expression of a modern writer, the débris formed by the crumbling down of the ancient metrical romance. The earliest English specimens of the former is the derisive ballad on the battle of Lewes, mentioned in a former chapter; and Laurence Minot's songs, three quarters of a century later, may be regarded as ballads. Compositions of the latter class, Arthurian and outside the Arthurian cycle, are numerous in the Percy folio. Infinitely the best is "The Boy and the Mantle," which, though here transferred to the Court of Arthur, originated abroad, and probably came into our literature from the French. It is, nevertheless, significant as an example of the attractive influence which made Arthur, like Alfred in another sphere, a nucleus of legend; and as humorously expressive

## A mery geste of

Robyn Hooode and of hys lyle, wyth  
aniche playe for to be played  
in Maye games very ple-  
satunte and full of pastyme.

¶ (••) ¶



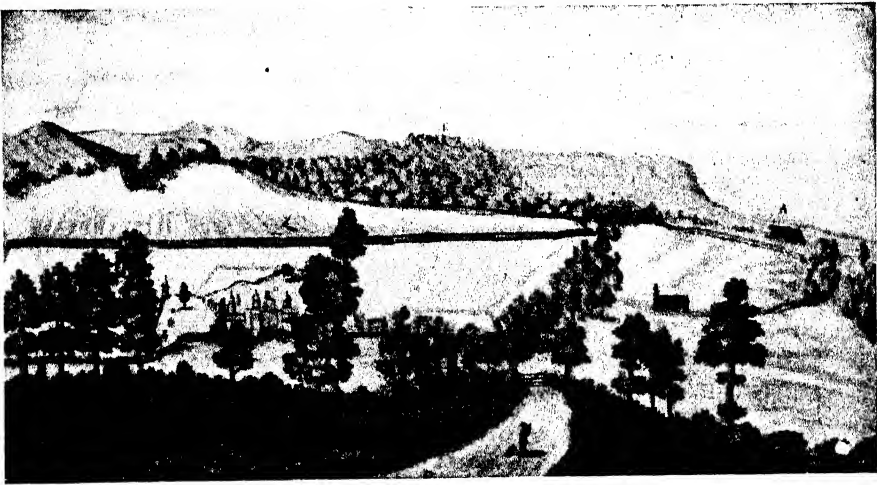
Title-page of "A Mery Geste of Robyn Hooode," 1550, printed by Copland

of that lax morality at the Arthurian court by which both the Round Table and the Idylls of the King came to disaster. Among the more elaborate of these Arthurian ballad-romances may be named *King Arthur and the King of Cornwall*, *The Green Knight*, *Sir Lambwell* (Launfal), and *The Marriage of Sir Gawain*, one of the best, not so much on account of the power of the poet as of the power of the story. The non-Arthurian romances include the tales of Sir Triamour and Sir Eglamour, and other imaginary heroes. In general, their poetical merit is small, and to convey an idea how legend could be effectively treated in ballad-poetry we must have recourse to Scotland, although the text which we are about to quote is later than the fifteenth or early sixteenth century. It illustrates, however, the progress of legend into poetry; first the myth itself, originating, as we have seen, in the power of prophecy or second sight attributed to Thomas of Ercildoune towards the end of the thirteenth century; next, the metrical romance written about the beginning of the fifteenth; lastly, the ballad, which, in its original shape, may not have been much later than the romance, but which, as we have it, is of far more recent date. It is very national, the conclusion, in particular, is a characteristic piece of the dry humour of Scotland. After True Thomas has kissed the Fairy Queen, and she has taken him up on her palfrey:

O they rode on, and farther on,  
 And they waded through rivers aboon the knee;  
 And they saw neither sun nor moon,  
 But they heard the roaring of the sea  
 It was mirk, mirk night; there was nae stern light;  
 And they waded through red blude to the knee:  
 For a' the blude that's shed on earth  
 Rins through the springs o' that countrie.  
 Sine they came on to a garden green,  
 And she pu'd an apple frae a tree,  
 Take this for thy wages, true Thomas,  
 It will give thee the tongue that can never lee.  
 'My tongue is mine ain,' true Thomas said,  
 "A gudely gift ye wast gie to me;  
 I neither dought to buy or sell,  
 At fair or tryst where I may be.  
 I dought neither speak to prince nor peer,  
 Nor ask of grace from fair ladye."  
 Now hold thy peace, the lady said,  
 For as I say, so it must be.  
 He has gotten a coat of the even cloth,  
 And a pair of shoes of the velvet green;  
 And till seven years were gone and past,  
 True Thomas on earth was never seen.

Akin to these legendary ballads is another group treating of personages, fully believed by the writers to be historical, but in reality mythical and quasi-supernatural—whose "gestes," accordingly, form a connecting link between the legendary and the historical ballad. The most remarkable example is

Robin Hood, whom modern criticism has transformed from a forester into a forest elf, a kinsman of Herne the Hunter. It can hardly be considered a dry or destructive criticism which thus metamorphoses Robin Hood and Maid Marian into Oberon and Titania! It is admitted, however, that, mythical as the original Robin Hood may have been, his name was applied by ballad writers to "any robber leader who made his home in forests or on moors, excelled in archery, defied the oppressive forest laws, and thus attracted popular sympathy." It thus has much significance as a type of the age-long resistance of the Saxon to Norman forest tyranny. It appears from Peacock's *Last Day of Windsor Forest* that so late as 1814 the name was bestowed upon a farmer near Windsor, who, armed with two weapons which Robin Hood never possessed, a gun and a legal opinion in his



Kirkley Nunnery, the traditional burial-place of Robin Hood

*From Stukeley's "Itinerarium Curiosum," 1776*

favour, "sallied forth daily into the forest to kill the King's deer, and returned home every evening loaded with spoil." In some measure, then, the Robin Hood cycle may be regarded as a national epic, celebrating the national characteristics of love of sport, and hatred of oppression. The treatment of so many hands is necessarily unequal, but a sylvan breath blows through the whole. There is pathos and dignity in the closing scene, when Robin Hood, having repaired to Kirkley nunnery for medical treatment, is treacherously bled to death by the Abbess :

He bethought him of his bugle horn,  
Which hung low down to his knee ;  
He set his horn unto his mouth,  
And blew out weak blasts three.  
Then Little John, when hearing him,  
As he sat under a tree,  
" I fear my master is near dead,  
He blows so wearily."

Then Little John to Kirkley is gone,  
 As fast as he can dree ;  
 But when he came to Kirkley Hall,  
 He broke locks two or three,  
 Until he came to bold Robin,  
 Then fell he on his knee ;  
 "A boon, a boon," cries Little John,  
 "Master I beg of thee."  
 "What is that boon," quoth Robin Hood,  
 "Little John, thou begs of me ?"  
 "It is to burn fair Kirkley Hall,  
 And all their nunnery "  
 "Now nay, now nay," quoth Robin Hood,  
 "That boon I'll not grant thee ;  
 I never hurt woman in all my life,  
 Nor man in her company.  
 "I never hurt fair maid in all my time,  
 Nor at my end shall it be,  
 But give me my bent bow in my hand,  
 And a broad arrow I'll let flee ;  
 And where the arrow is taken up,  
 There shall my grave digged be "

Another important ballad cycle is the Northumbrian, recording the exploits of three outlaws, Adam Bell, Clum of the Clough, and William of Cloudesli. These personages are possibly historical, but their adventures have been overlaid with many accretions, including traditions imported from the legend of Robin Hood. They thus form a connecting link with the genuine historical ballad, particularly as the two most celebrated examples of this belong to the Border. *Chervy Chase* is too universally known to require particular mention. *The Battle of Otterbourne* sings a memorable conflict in 1388, when the Scotch leader, Douglas, was slain, and the English leader, Percy (Hotspur), made prisoner. Both nations could take pride in the event, and the hands of both may be discovered in the ballad, an interesting example of the modifications which such pieces underwent from their first rude beginnings until they eventually attained coherence, the final redaction in this instance proceeding from no less a hand than Sir Walter Scott's. The composition is too lengthy, but is in parts very spirited :

They lighted high on Otterbourne,  
 Upon the bent sae brown,  
 They lighted high on Otterbourne  
 And threw their pallions down.  
 And he that had a bonnie boy  
 Sent out his horse to grass ;  
 And he that had not a bonnie boy,  
 His own servànt he was.  
 And up then spake a little page  
 Before the peep of dawn ;  
 "O waken ye, waken ye, my good lord,  
 For Percy's hard at hand."

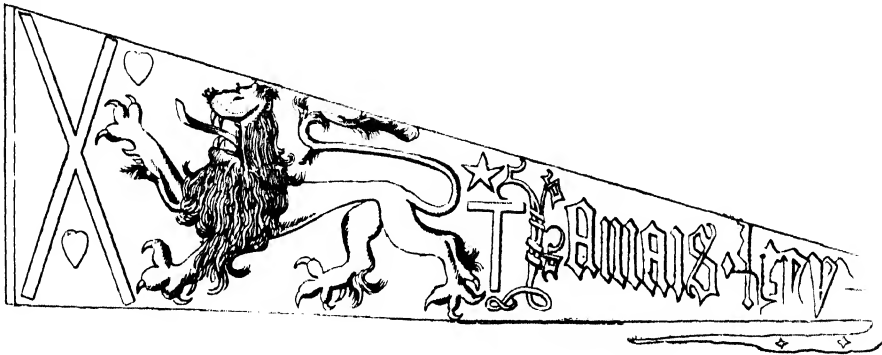
"Ye lie, ye lie, ye liar loud,  
 Sae loud I hear ye lee;  
 For Percy had not men yestreen  
 To dight my men and me.

But I have dreamed a dreary dream  
 Beyond the Isle of Skye;  
 I saw a dead man win a fight,  
 And I think that man was I."

Upon this reminiscence he arms, but the delay occasioned by his incredulity is fatal to him:

He belted on his gude braid sword,  
 And to the field he ran,  
 But he forgot the helmet gude  
 That should have kept his brain.

It is not likely that *Chery Chase* and *Otterbourne* became the subjects of poems other than chants of a rude kind, until long after the events recorded



The Banner of Douglas at the Battle of Otterbourne

*From Scott's "Border Antiquities"*

had taken place. Their survival in song, when so many events of greater importance are forgotten by the minstrel, may be ascribed to the strong clannish feeling prevailing upon the Border, and the continuance of turbulence and warfare in that district until a late period. The memories of Southern bards were less tenacious, and the low contemporary condition of poetry in England may account for the absence of ballads on Agincourt or the Wars of the Roses. At the end of the century, and the beginning of the next, however, a decided disposition was shown to versify contemporary incidents. *The Babes in the Wood* is conjectured, though doubtfully, to have been a veiled allegory of the murder of the young princes in the Tower; and Bosworth and Flodden furnished matter for ballad epics. One poem on Flodden is especially remarkable as a survival of alliterative metre to so late a period. It is further curious as a tribute to a patron, being composed for the special glorification of the house of Stanley. The Stanleys also figure largely in one of the most interesting poems of the period, the ballad of *Lady Bessie*, no other than Elizabeth of York, the queen of Henry VII. This long poem is extremely remarkable, as being

to all appearance the composition of the princess's counsellor and agent, Humphrey Brereton, a servant of Lord Stanley, and giving a most circumstantial, though probably much over-coloured, account of Elizabeth's share in the revolution by her intrigues with the Earl of Richmond, and particulars, no doubt authentic, of Brereton's own adventures. It is further valuable as an illustration of the political demoralisation of the times, the Duke of Buckingham being praised to the skies for having conspired with Elizabeth against Richard, though he had been a chief agent in the deposition of her brother. Portions of the ballad probably do not proceed from Brereton himself, as he could scarcely have confused the tragedies of the young princes and of the Duke of Clarence, and drowned the former in the latter's butt of wine. Brereton's account of his own adventures, though most interesting, is prosaic : in describing Bosworth his colleague, if such there be, rises into poetry. Sir William Harrington beseeches King Richard to fly :

Your horse is ready at your hand,  
Another day you may worship wim,  
And to reign with royalty,  
And wear your crown and be our king.

"Give me my battle-axe in my hand,  
And set my crown on my head so high,  
For by him that made both sun and moon,  
King of England this day will I die."

Beside his head they hewed the crown,  
And danged on him as they were wood  
They stroke his basnet to his head  
Until his brains came out in blood.

Not all the historical ballads are so tragic, a considerable number deal with humorous anecdotes of kings or distinguished characters. One of the best known and most entertaining is *The Abbot of Canterbury*, but the tale is common to many nations. Purely English is the "Geste of King Edward the Fourth and the Tanner of Tamworth," where the affable monarch, meeting a tanner riding "a mare of four shilling," inquires the way to Drayton Bassett, and is answered :

"The next pair of gallows thou comest unto,  
Turn in at thy right hand."

The king, humouring the joke, enters into discourse with the tanner, and expresses a desire to become his apprentice :

"Marry, heaven forfend," the tanner replied,  
"That thou my 'prentice were,  
Thou woldst spend more good than I should win  
By forty shilling a year."

The king proposes to the tanner to change steeds with him, the tanner agrees, but demands and obtains twenty groats boot for his four shilling mare, and even then makes reservations :

"Although thou hast gotten Brocke my mare,  
Thou gettest not my cow hide."

The king disclaims all desire to appropriate the article in question, which is destined to bring the tanner to grief, for as he mounts, marvelling much whether the stirrup be of gold or brass, the generous courser, admiring neither the hoofs nor the horns of the hide which the tanner has pitched upon his back, bolts with him, throws him, and he is glad to recover his mare by paying back the boot he has had with her. Then the king, Robin Hood like, blows a blast on his bugle ; the courtiers come trooping up ; the tanner, expecting a halter, gets an estate, and concludes the ballad by a promise to his Majesty that if ever he cometh to merry Tamworth neat's leather shall clout his shoon.

Another variety of the humorous ballad, of which "Asit befell one Saturday" is a good example, is the *Tom o' Bedlam* ballad, formed by stringing together a medley of lines from different pieces, with no regard to anything but rhyme and metre. The effect somewhat resembles that of Pope's *Song by a Person of Quality*.

The most remarkable pieces which remain to be noticed belong in general to one of two classes, ballads founded on legends outside the cycles of chivalric romance, or ballads treating of events of the day. Both for the most part appear to belong to a later period than that at which we have arrived, and must be reserved for notice along with the poetry of the late sixteenth century. Among those which have the best claim to antiquity is the tragic history of Glasgerion, the Arion of Scottish legend, who

Could harp a fish out of saut water,  
Or water out of a stane,  
Or milk out of a maiden's breasts  
That bairn had never nane.

Glasgerion has an amour with a lady of high degree ; his page personates him ; the lady discovers the deceit, and kills herself :

But home then went Glasgerion,  
A woeful man was he :  
Says, "Come hither, thou Jack, my boy,  
Come thou hither to me.

"If I had killed a man to-night,  
Jack, I would tell it thee :  
But if I have not killed a man to-night,  
Jack, thou hast killed three."

And he pulled out his bright brown sword,  
And dried it on his sleeve,  
And he smote off that lither<sup>1</sup> lad's head,  
And asked no man no leave.

He set the sword's point to his breast,  
The pummel to a stone.  
Through the falseness of that lither lad  
Those three lives were all gone.

One famous ballad stands out prominently from the rest as being, so far as

<sup>1</sup> Treacherous.

known, the invention of the anonymous writer. It is *The Nut Brown Maid*, probably written towards 1500, and so falling within our present scope. It was first printed in Antwerp in 1502. It is a rare instance of a ballad in dialogue but more than this, an Amoebean idyll. A lover, whose state of mind nothing but its absolute necessity to the poem could induce us to tolerate, puts his sweetheart's affection to the proof by pretending to be an outlaw. Never were the tenderness and truth of womanhood more beautifully displayed than in her acceptance of the supposed situation, which is even carried so far that she does not shrink when informed that he has already a mistress, whose servant she will have to be. There can of course be only one issue from such a situation. The metre is as exceptional as the theme, and more musical and sonorous than that of any previous lyric in the language, and the pair of refrains running through the piece are managed with extreme skill. The following four stanzas are a fair specimen of the prolonged but never tedious dialogue.

HE.

I counsel you, remember how  
It is no maiden's law  
Nothing to doubt, but to run out  
To wood with an outlaw.  
For ye must there in your hand bear  
A bow, ready to draw.  
And as a thief, thus must you live  
Ever in dread and awe.  
Whereby to you great harm might grow:  
Yet had I lever then  
That I unto the green wood go  
Alone, a banished man.

SHE.

I think not nay, but as ye say,  
It is no maiden's lore;  
But love may make me for your sake,  
As I have said before,  
To come on foot, to hunt and shoot  
To get us meat in store.  
For so that I your company  
May have, I ask no more.  
From which to part, it makes my heart  
As cold as any stone;  
For in my mind, of all mankind,  
I love but you alone.

HE.

For an outlaw this is the law  
That men him take and bind  
Without pity, hangèd to be,  
And waver with the wind.  
If I had need (as God forbede!)  
What rescue could ye find?  
Forsooth I trow, you and your bow  
For fear would draw behind;



**¶** To pay at the fery for a man and his bagage. iij. m<sup>rs</sup>.  
**¶** Item a hors the man and his bagage. i. g<sup>s</sup>.  
**¶** Item an cnyg hors only i d. Brokers to pay for a cloth under p<sup>l</sup>.  
 b. the broker shal haue ij. g<sup>s</sup>.  
**¶** Item for a cloth aboue xl. s. the broker hath iij. g<sup>s</sup>.  
**¶** Item C. ellis Cotton doth partly lyke a clothe iij. g<sup>s</sup>. 7c.

**B**e it right or wro<sup>g</sup>. these me a mong. on womē do cōplaine  
 Affirmyng this. how that it is. alabour spent in vaine  
 To loue the wete. for neuer a dele. they loue a man agayne  
 For ere a man do. what he can. ther fouour to attayne  
 Per yf a newe. to them pursue. ther furst trew louer than  
 Labourerth for nought and from her though. he is a bannished mā

**I** Say not nay. bat that all day. it is bothe writ and sayde  
 That womans sayth. is as who saythe. all vterly decayed  
 But neuitheles. right good wretes. i this case might be layd  
 That they lone trewe. i cōpnew. recorde yf Anbri<sup>o</sup>ne maide be  
 Whiche fre in her loue. whā her to proue. he cam to make his mone  
 He olde not departe. for in her herte. she loupd but hym allone

**U**han betwene vs. lete vs discusse. what was all the maner.  
 Sett to ene them too. we wyl also. telle all they pepyne in fere  
 That she was in. now I begynne. soo that pe me answere.  
 Wherefore pe. that present be. I pray pou geue an eare  
 I am the knyght. I cum be wght. as secret as I can  
 Sayng alas. thus stondryth the cause. I am a bannished man

**A**nd I pour wylle. for to fulfille. in this wyl. not refuse  
 Trusting to shewe. in wordis fewe. y men haue an ille vse  
 To ther owne shame wpmē. to blame. i causeles the accuse.  
 Therefore to pon. I answere now. alle wymen to excuse.  
 Np n owe heert dere. w you what chere. I pre p pou telle a noon  
 For in my mnde. of all mankynde I loue but non allon

i      ¶ Nēdich so. a dede is do. wherfore moche harme shal growe  
 Np desteny. is for to dep. a shamfuld the I crowe  
 Or ellis to flee. the ton must bee. none other wep I knowe.  
 But to w<sup>o</sup> dr awe. as an outlaw. and take me to my bowe  
 hxx

The Nut Brown Maid

From Richard Arnold's "Chronicle," circ. 1503

And no mervaille, for little availe  
Were in your counsel then ;  
Wherefore I'll to the green wood go  
Alone, a banished man.

SHE.

Right well know ye that women be  
But feeble for to fight ;  
No woman hede it is indede  
To be as hold as Knight .  
Yet in such fere if that you were  
With enemies day and night,  
I would withstand, with bow in hand,  
To grieve them as I might,  
And you to save, as women have,  
From death men many a one ;  
For in my mind, of all mankind,  
I love but you alone.

*The Nut Brown Maid* is indeed a pearl of song, and the same may be said of many other British ballads, especially those of Scotland, of which, in general, we shall have to speak later. Their greatest importance, however, does not consist in the merit of individual pieces, but in the revival of European poetry of which they were in such large measure the instruments. The popular poetry of Germany, Scandinavia, and Spain is not inferior to that of the British Isles, but the study of these came later, and the impulse to it proceeded from Britain. The Romantic School, in so far as popular poetry was an element in it, dates from the day when the future Irish Bishop picked the torn and dirty manuscript out of the bureau in the little Shropshire town.

## CHAPTER X

### THE AGE OF THE FIRST TUDORS

WE have now arrived at the verge of an epochal period in English letters, when, no longer oscillating between contending forces as in the middle ages, or plunged into torpor when it ought to be going on to victory, literature presents itself as the expression of the thought and language of a united nation, and at the same time as a growing organism, continually developing new phases of activity, and augmenting simultaneously in depth and in breadth. The character of unity, indeed, had belonged to it for more than a century; but just when the amalgamation of Saxon and Norman was perfected, a blight seemed to wither the promise of their union. Enough has been said upon this subject; it need only be added that the paralysis of literary productiveness in England cannot, as in Italy, be ascribed in any degree to the enlistment of the best minds in the service of classical studies. Civil strife may be alleged as a reason, and it is certainly true that the Wars of the Roses were dynastic contests involving no principle, and powerless to fire the imagination and create impassioned feeling as war waged for freedom or even for conquest might have done. But no single cause will account for a phenomenon manifested simultaneously in almost every country in Europe, especially at a time when light was breaking in on all sides, and the arts were flourishing beyond previous example. The reawakening of lulled genius near the close of the fifteenth century is not so mysterious as its slumber; yet of the two great intellectual movements which apparently called it into being it may be said that the Renaissance was rather its nurse than its parent, and the Reformation rather its consequence than its cause.

The literary Renaissance dates from Petrarch, and had consequently long preceded the revival at the end of the fifteenth century. It had, as we have seen, been rather detrimental than favourable to original power; but when original power awoke of itself, it found that the Renaissance had greatly expanded and enriched its field of operation. The English author at the end of the fifteenth century addressed a different public from that which he would have encountered at the end of the fourteenth. Although actual literary production had been sparse and unimportant in the intervening period, literature itself was more widely and highly esteemed. The idea of its being the special property of the clerical or even of the scholarly class had been given up. English prose, which no one before Mandeville's translator had written except in devotional treatises, now claimed by far the largest share of

published literature. Translations were being made from all cultivated languages, and each new version begot the desire for another. Such events



Henry VIII.

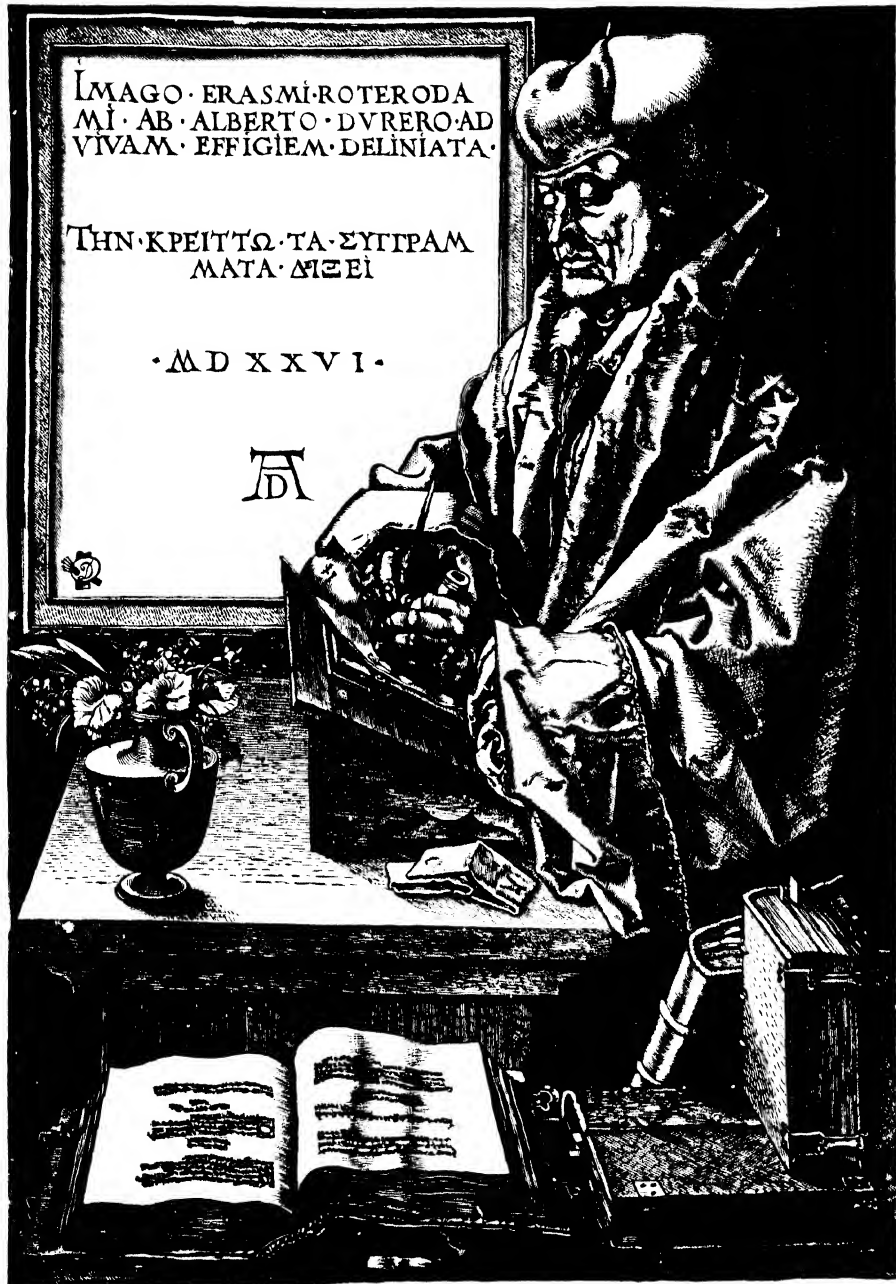
*After the portrait by Holbein in Lord Leconfield's collection at Petworth*

as the progress of Turkish conquest and the discoveries of the Spaniards and Portuguese had powerfully affected the mind of man, and engendered a thirst for information which could only be gratified by books. Just at this conjuncture the printing press came in perfect correspondence with the new order of things. All these various influences, so favourable to literature, may be summed up under the head of Renaissance, a general fermentation of the spirit, eventually carrying those of whom it took possession far beyond that exclusive veneration for the classics which had for the time contributed to repress originality of genius.

The Renaissance may also not unfairly be described as one of the parents of the second potent influence which regenerated literature and made it great, the Reformation. Two widely differing strains of ancestry may be traced in the Reformation's pedigree. There were in the first place the spiritually minded, the simple and devout who remained unaffected by the flood of new light which

the Renaissance was bringing in, and relied solely upon their own pious instincts. In the second place were the scholars, champions of the Renaissance in no way remarkable for piety, but whose æsthetic taste and whose critical conscience were revolted by the prevalent superstitions.

The *Epistolae Obscurorum Virorum* sums up the feelings of such men as perfectly as Luther's discourses sum up the feelings of the religious; and



Desiderius Erasmus

*After the original woodcut by Albert Dürer*

may remind us that there was a Renaissance beyond the Alps, and that if the humanists of Leo the Tenth's court preferred him to Luther. the

humanists of Germany inclined the other way. Almost the perfect mean between the two extremes was held by Erasmus; and when we see how Renaissance and Reformation between them could equip that consummate man of letters, and with what a public they could provide him, we see to what a height they were capable of exalting literature.

To make an Erasmus required a combination of the Italian elements then permeating cultivated society in England with the sound and sterling type

**APOPTHEGMES,**  
**that is to saye, prompte, quicke, wittie**  
**and sententious saynges, of certain**  
**Emperours, Kynges, Capitaines, Philoso-**  
**phers and Oratours, aswell Grekes, as Ro-**  
**maines, bothe betwixt pleasaunt & profita-**  
**ble to reade, partly for all maner of**  
**persones, & especially Gentlemen.**  
**first gathered and compiled**  
**in Latine by the cyght fa-**  
**mous clerke Ma-**  
**ster Erasmus**  
**of Rottero-**  
**dame.**  
**And now translated into**  
**Englyshe by Nico-**  
**las Udall.**

*Excusum typis Ricardi Grafton.*

1542.

*Cum privilegio ad imprimendum solum.*



Title-page of Erasmus' "Apophtegmes," 1542

less native vigour Italy might have dominated her literature as completely as France now dominates that of the other Latin peoples, but while willing to be instructed the national mind refused to be subjugated. The most perfect instance to be found of the combination of the two types, the exemplar at the same time of the new Englishman and the true Englishman, is Sir THOMAS MORE, the enthusiast for Pico della Mirandola, whose life he wrote, the friend of Erasmus, and, save when religious differences interfered, of every good and intellectual man with whom it was possible for him to come into contact. It further happens that the book upon which his literary reputation rests is, though originally written in Latin, the truest representative of the better English mind of its day.

It is needless to enter at any great length into a history so well known as Sir Thomas More's. Born in 1478, educated in the household of Cardinal Morton, Archbishop of

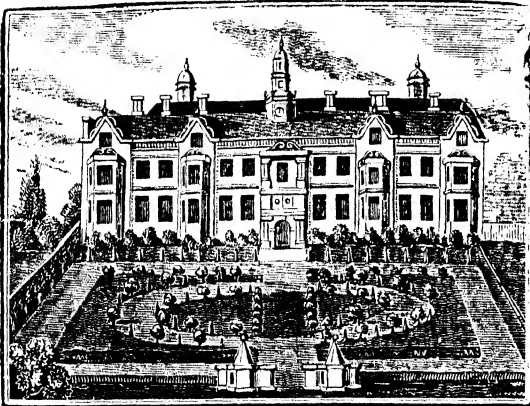
of her ancient character. English scholars visited Italy, some, like Pace, sent expressly by patrons for the purpose of study. The libraries of newly founded colleges were enriched with books and manuscripts imported from Italy. Italian secretaries were becoming indispensable to sovereigns. Italian sculptors and artists were remedying the backward state of the arts in a country where the mediæval style had gone out and the Renaissance had not come in. Italian merchants flourished in London, and Italian ecclesiastics bereft the natives of bishoprics and benefices. Distinguished men of letters, like Polydore Vergil and Carmelianus, found themselves at home in a country where the Italian language was studied, Italian books were read and sometimes translated, and even Italian writing masters were imported to regenerate the national handwriting. Had the English character possessed

Canterbury, and afterwards at Oxford, where he learned Greek from Grocyn and Linacre, he formed at nineteen an intimate friendship with Erasmus, was called to the bar at or about the same early age, was elected to Parliament at twenty-six, and there distinguished himself by frustrating an attempt at extortion by Henry VII., who explained to the Spanish Ambassador that his subjects would become disorderly if they were too well off, an evil which he certainly did everything to obviate as far as in him lay. Henry avenged himself by fining More's father, but the new reign brought favour to the son, who was employed in embassies and other business of State, and received the strongest tokens of personal attachment from the sovereign, which did not blind him to Henry's utter ruthlessness when public affairs were concerned. "If my head," he told his son-in-law Roper as early as 1525, "should win him a castle in France, it should not fail to go." In 1529 he succeeded Wolsey as Lord Chancellor, the first instance of the office being conferred upon a layman. His character for ability, industry, and integrity in the discharge of his judicial functions was the very highest: the one stain upon his memory is his persecution of heretics, which it is difficult to reconcile either with the general humanity of his disposition or with the liberality of religious sentiment which he had expressed in his early writings. He



Sir Thomas More

*From an engraving by Bartolozzi after a drawing by Holbein*



Beaufort House, Chelsea, where More lived

needed but to have looked at his own Utopia to have seen the possibility of the union of firm faith with wide toleration; but probably he was alarmed at what he deemed the social consequences of the new movement, and irritated by his acrimonious controversy with Tyndale, and his deep annoyance at the proceedings connected with the royal divorce. His opposition to this and to the more lenient treatment of heretics which came in its train cost him the Chancellorship in 1532: in 1534 he and Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, were imprisoned for refusing to renounce the supremacy of the Pope; and in 1535 were beheaded for denying the supremacy of the King. It is impossible to withhold the deepest sympathy for victims so illustrious perishing for conscience sake, even though they were but treated as they themselves had treated poor and defenceless men. Henry's action, however, was

not brutal tyranny, but high policy. He acted in the spirit of the French Revolutionists when they proclaimed their irreparable breach with royalty by the sacrifice of an innocent and well-intentioned King. Nothing could so clearly tell the nation and the world that Papal pretensions would never again be tolerated in England. The Pope on his part was playing the same game. He had hastened the crisis by sending Fisher a cardinal's hat, protesting afterwards that he did not know how deeply the Bishop had

incurred the King's displeasure. If this was so, he was badly served by his agents, but this is hardly credible of so sagacious a pontiff as Paul III. It is more probable that he wished to drive Henry into extreme courses which he thought would provoke a revolution, and that the heads of More and Fisher were but counters in the game played between Pope and King.

More's character probably owes something in our estimation to the fact that it has been mainly transmitted to us by an affectionate son-in-law, but the general truth of the portrait is attested by the concurring suffrages of the best and wisest men of his time. Men of genius like Erasmus, men of erudition like Colet, men of science like Linacre, men of piety like Fisher, were his devoted friends. even men of affairs like Henry and Wolsey honoured, and, so far as their natures permitted, loved him. Not a voice is raised against his deportment in the highest legal office; and, indeed, the circumstances attending his fall and death are the conclusive proof of his unbending integrity. The most characteristic trait in his disposition was a geniality so exuberant that it is highly to his honour to have reconciled it with the gravity befitting the magistrate. When at the height of his prosperity he lived with the simplicity, and amid his misfortunes

**A fruteful/  
and pleasaunt worke of the  
beste state of a publyque weale, and  
of the newe ple called Utopia; written  
in Latine by Sp<sup>r</sup> Thomas More  
knyght, and translated into Englyshe  
by Raphe Robynson Citizein and  
Goldsmith of London, at the  
procurement, and earnest re-  
quest of George Cadlowe  
Citizein & Haberdallher  
of the same Citie.**  
(.)

**Printed at London  
by Abraham Wele, dwelling in Pauls  
churcheparde at the signe of  
the Lambe. Anno  
1551.**



Title-page of Robinson's translation of  
"Utopia," 1551

he displayed the resignation of a true practical philosopher. Intellectually, he was rather brilliant than great; his precocity and powers of adaptation were marvellous; he shone equally among scholars and statesmen so long as originality was not required, but he was rather fitted to adorn than to extend the domain of letters; and as a statesman he took narrow views and misunderstood the spirit of his time.

If, however, More was no creator in literature, he was a most felicitous adapter and translator. The ideal commonwealth of Plato lives again in his *Utopia*, a work whose title, though strictly a solecism, has become a portion of the vocabulary of every European tongue, and which is itself the parent of numberless imitations, not one of which has approached its celebrity. Though



originally written in Latin, and published first at Louvain (1516), then successively at Paris, Basel, and Vienna, and not once in England during its author's life, and translated into German, French, and Italian before its appearance in an English dress, it has ranked as an English classic since the publication of the fine translation by Ralph Robinson in 1551, and is probably as much read now as at any period of its existence.

Unlike most fictions, especially those which have no concern with real life, More's romance charms less by its fancy than by its apparent reasonableness. The laws and customs of Utopia seem, generally speaking, so obviously right that we can hardly believe that they do not exist somewhere, and wonder why this locality is not nearer home. What can be more proper than that everybody should work, that nobody should work to excess, that there should be no wars except for grievous wrongs, that Kings should be forbidden to hoard, that there should be no monopolies? And, in fact, More is continually holding up the example of his Utopians to his countrymen, and sharply censuring the social inequalities and injustices which he perceives at home. It does not appear to trouble him that the innovations he recommends would compel a complete reconstruction of society: when, however, he had himself become something of a power in the State, he practically repudiated the feature of Utopian policy whose conception does him most honour. In nothing had he appeared so far in advance of his time as in religious toleration:—

12 V T O P I A E I N S V L A E T A R V L A.



Plan of Utopia

From More's "Utopia," 1518

sharply censuring the social inequalities and injustices which he perceives at home. It does not appear to trouble him that the innovations he recommends would compel a complete reconstruction of society: when, however, he had himself become something of a power in the State, he practically repudiated the feature of Utopian policy whose conception does him most honour. In nothing had he appeared so far in advance of his time as in religious toleration:—

King Utopus, even at the first beginning, hearing that the inhabitants of the land were before his coming thither in continual dissension and strife among themselves for their religions: perceiving also that this common dissension (whiles every several sect took several parts in fighting for their country) was the only occasion of his conquest over them all, as soon as he had gotten the victory first of all he made a decree that it should be lawful for every man to favour and follow what religion he would, and that he might do the best he could to bring others to his opinion, so that he did it peaceably, gently, quietly, and soberly, without hasty and contentious rebuking and inveighing against others. If he could not by fair and gentle speech induce them unto his opinion, yet he should use no kind of violence, and refrain from displeasing and seditious words. To him that would vehemently and fervently in this cause strive and contend was decreed banishment and bondage. This law did King Utopus make not only for the maintenance of peace, which he saw through continual contention and mortal hatred utterly extinguished: but also because he thought this decree should make for the furtherance of religion. Whereof he durst determine and



Io. Clemens. Hythlodæus. Tho. Morus. Pet. Aegid.

Headpiece from More's "Utopia," 1518

decide nothing unadvisedly, as doubting whether God desiring manifold and diverse sorts of honour would inspire sundry men with sundry kinds of religion. And this surely he thought a very unmeet and foolish thing, and a point of arrogant presumption, to compel all others by violence and threatenings to agree to the same that thou believest to be true. Furthermore though there be one religion which alone is true, and all others vain and superstitious, yet did he well foresee (so that the matter were handled with reason and sober modesty) that the truth of its own power would at the last issue out and come to light.

Many of the leading spirits of the time no doubt thought with More, but nowhere else can the principle of toleration be found so clearly enunciated. His subsequent desertion of it cannot in the case of such a man be imputed to either ambition or timidity. He had no doubt come to regard the views of his youth as unpractical, and congratulated himself upon his growth in good sense, while he was but giving one more proof how much wiser even in practical matters the philosopher may sometimes be than the man of affairs. In many other passages he assails the vices of his time with wit and raillery. The following is a most cutting piece of irony. After observing that the Utopians never enter into treaties, he adds:—

our lordes blisse you

My deare beloved daughter I doe not but by the way of  
compassion referringe hither in these times in which we  
thee comforte these fathers of the church (as I say) I have  
indeed to say for these whose matter & cause I have  
to put you in trouble & fine of mynde concerninge me byng  
speccially for that it is not only for me but that you have  
was brought also before the court here my selfe I have  
it necessary to advertise you of the very truth / to the end that you  
might conceyve more hope thyn the matter greatly left upon  
other tyme it might aggrave your heart / nor more gra-  
ve than the matter greatly is on the other syde / wherefore I  
shall understand that on Friday the last day of apyle in the after-  
noon I have comyn in hys into me & shewed me that as he  
would speke w me. whereupon I shewed my grette & went on  
as I have comyn into the chancel to hym. where I was  
somewhat knowyn & somwhat knowne in the way. And in short  
comyn in to the chamber where hys master shipp sat. (as I say)  
as solicitor as shipp & as doctor diggonell: I was asked to  
saye whye in no waye I would. whereupon as shipp  
unto me that he desired not that I had by such friends  
hither had referred to me since the new statute made at the  
beginning of the parliament. whereunto I answered ye verily  
it for as much as I have here I have no consideration  
people: I thought it best w me to bestow my selfe  
thyn / & therefore I wyllyngly the vote shortly / & the effect of the  
I need marked nor studied to put in remembrance. As he  
asked me whether I had not red the first statute of Henry of  
Henry byng hed of the church. whereunto I answered yit as  
master shipp declared unto me that hys ye was now by an  
parliament ordeined that hys hys selfe & hys hys selfe  
might have bene & perpetually shuld be hys. good  
the church of england under crist the hys selfe  
of hys compassate these assured shuld demerit  
& what my mynde was therein. whereunto I  
good faith, I had well trusted that the best  
was to be my selfe, quoth he



They be brought into this opinion chiefly because that in those parts of the world leagues between princes be wont to be kept and observed very slenderly. For here in Europa, and especially in these parts where the faith and religion of Christ reigneth, the majesty of leagues is everywhere esteemed holy and inviolable: partly through the justice and goodness of princes, and partly at the reverence and motion of the head bishops. Which like as they make no promise themselves, but they do very religiously perform the same, so they exhort all princes in any wise to abide by their promises, and them that refuse so to do, by their pontifical power and authority they compel thereto.

More knew perfectly well that in no age had public faith been more systematically violated by sovereigns than in his own, and that "the head bishops" were much more likely to exhort monarchs to break their promises than to keep them. His satire is an excellent specimen of the mocking yet earnest Renaissance spirit of which, with all his decorum, he was a leading English representative.

After the *Utopia*, the most important work by More, or ascribed to him, is the unfinished *Life of King Richard the Third*. A Latin version of this work exists, and it has been questioned which is the original. It is also a question,

whether, on the strength of an old tradition and some appearance of the book's proceeding from an eye-witness, it should not be attributed to Cardinal Morton, in which case More would only be the translator. This view appears to us highly probable, for the following reasons. It is unlikely that More should have left so brief a work unfinished, which Morton, a busy statesman stricken in years, might well have done. The neatness of the style, which led Hallam to term it the first English classic, is a phenomenon not uncommon in translations from the Latin, when native English exuberance was tamed by imitation of the tersest of tongues. Camden's *Elizabeth* is a conspicuous instance. If so, it is more probable that More would render another man's work

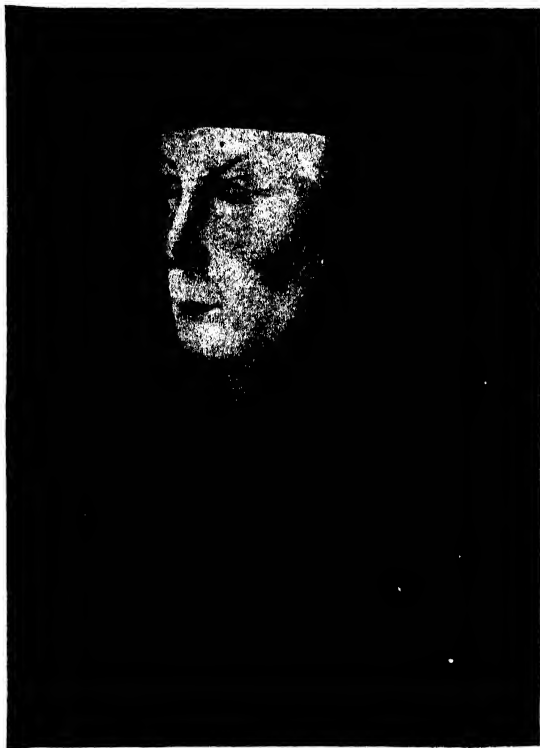


John Colet

From Holland's "Heroologia," 1620

than his own. The extremely favourable view of Edward the Fourth's character would scarcely have been taken by More, but would be inevitable to Morton, who must have written when Edward's daughter was Queen of England. This character—not a bad piece of historical painting if the shadows had not been left out—may be cited as a fair specimen of the book, and as showing how much it wears the air of a translation from the Latin :—

He was a goodly personage, and very princely to behold, of heart courageous, politic in counsel, in adversity nothing abashed, in prosperity rather joyful than proud, in peace just



**Thomas Cromwell**

*After the portrait in the National Portrait Gallery*

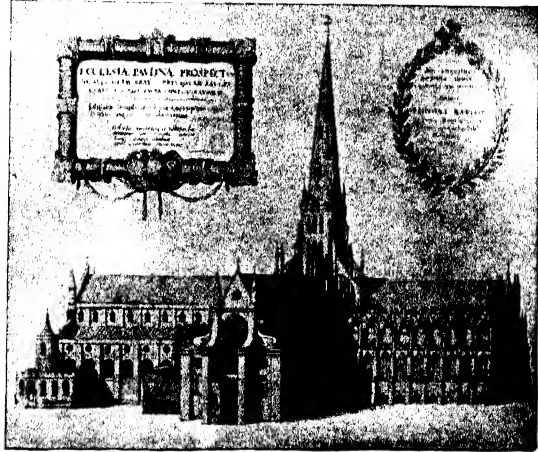
and merciful, in war sharp and fierce, in the field bold and hardy, and nathless no further than wisdom would adventure. Whose wars whoso well considers, he shall no less commend his wisdom where he avoided than his manhood when he vanquished. He was of visage lovely, of body mighty, strong, and clean made: howbeit in his latter days with over liberal diet, somewhat corpulent and burly, and nathless not uncomely: he was of youth greatly given to fleshly wantonness, from which health of body, in great prosperity and fortune, without a special grace hardly refraineth. This fault not greatly grieved the people; for neither could any man's pleasure extend to the displeasure of very many, and was without violence, and over that in his latter days lessened and well left. In which time in his latter days this realm was in quiet and prosperous estate: no fear of outward enemies, no war in hand, nor none towards but such as no man looked for; the people toward the prince not in a constrained fear but in a willing and loving

obedience, among themselves the commons in good peace.

More's theological writings will be alluded to in their place, they are not very important. He was the most distinguished among a group of distinguished men united by a community of tastes and objects, who, if they had assumed a common title, might have been known as the Erasmians. Few of them wrote much, but their influence on culture was very great, especially in the dissemination of the new learning which, contrary it may be to their intention, undermined the authority of the Church. Among them may especially be mentioned JOHN COLET (1467–1519), Dean of St. Paul's and Founder of St. Paul's School, whom travel in Italy had made a Neoplatonist, and, for his age, a daringly original expositor of Scripture: WILLIAM GROCYN (1446–1519), the principal champion of humanism in the University of Oxford, and at the

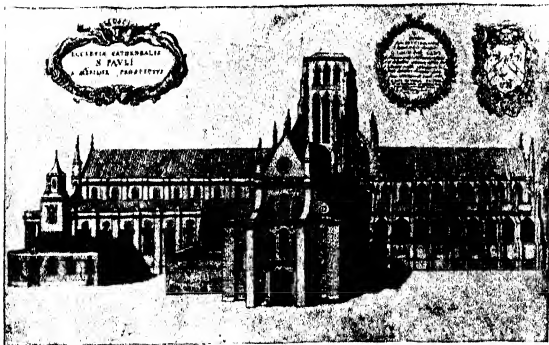
same time "half a schoolman," Biblical critic and commentator on the Fathers; THOMAS LINACRE (1460–1524), the learned physician and restorer of the study of the ancient medical writers, of whom it was doubted whether he was the better grammarian or physician; and RICHARD PACE (1482–1536), the diplomatist. At no previous time would such an alliance *junctarum Camoenarum* have been possible in England. It owed much to the countenance of Henry VIII., who not merely patronised literature with munificence and discrimination, but took a warm personal interest in it. If the wrecks of the beautiful monastic churches which cover the land exhibit him as in one point of view an architect of ruin, the mighty promoter of culture lives to this day in Trinity College, the greatest collegiate foundation in Europe, in the five Regius Professorships, and in the Royal College of Physicians.

Perhaps the most perfect example of English prose in the first quarter of the sixteenth century is a translation, the rendering of Froissart's *Chronicles* by Lord Berners. JOHN BOURCHIER, second Baron Berners, was a member of a distinguished family which had helped Henry VII. to the throne, and great nephew of the famous archbishop who had crowned three successive English monarchs who had attained the throne by revolutions. He was probably born about 1467, and first appears in history as holding a command in a war with France, and as concerned in the suppression of the Cornish insurrection in 1497. Henry VIII. favoured him, lent him money, and, perhaps to put him into the way of reimbursing the obligation, made him Chancellor of the Exchequer. Berners' abilities certainly did not lie in the direction of finance, he was in debt to the day of his death.



Old St. Paul's Cathedral, before the burning  
of the spire

*From an engraving by Hollar*



Old St. Paul's Cathedral, after the burning of the spire

*From an engraving by Hollar*

In 1518 he was joined with Kite, Archbishop of Armagh, in a mission to Spain, nominally to congratulate Charles V. on his accession, but in reality to conclude an alliance, which proved not to be feasible. He shone at the Field of Cloth of Gold, and was shortly afterwards made Governor of Calais, holding which post he died in 1532, having never forfeited his capricious master's favour. His literary activity seems to have been entirely mani-



Thomas Linacre

*After an original water-colour drawing*

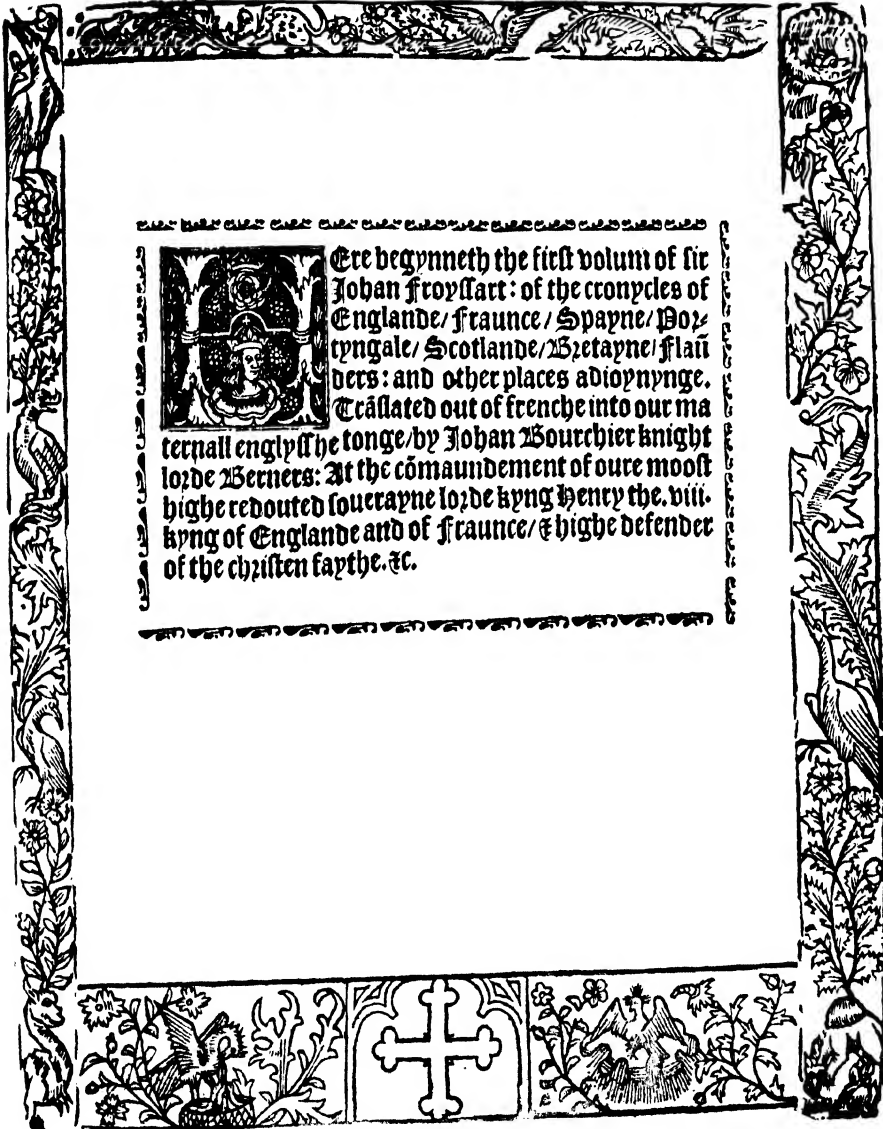
fest during the period of his government. Its product consisted of translations, one of which, that of the Spaniard Guevara's *Dial of Princes*, is of great literary significance, but will be best considered at a later date, along with the euphuism of which it was the parent in England. The others are translations of French and Spanish romances, which, especially that of Sir Huon of Bordeaux, possess much literary merit, but are of minor importance compared with that of Froissart's *Chronicles*, undertaken by command of Henry VIII., so noble and spirited, and, while reasonably faithful, at the same time so idiomatic, that, in rendering a French classic, Berners has enriched his country with an English one. The preciousness of the gift will be appreciated by all acquainted with Froissart, the modern Herodotus

for the inimitable charm of perfect simplicity of mind and speech, the delineator of chivalry at its most gorgeous period, to whom all history was a romance and every warrior an ideal knight, and who possessed above all men the gift of describing like an eye witness what he had never beheld. The following scene was not witnessed by him, the description is entirely made up from the reports of others, and yet who can quite believe that Froissart was not there ?



## THE END OF A LONG RIVALRY.

After this great discomfiture, the lords of England and Brittany returned and left the chase to their people: then there drew to the Earl of Mountfort, Sir John Chandos, Sir Robert Knolles, and divers others, and so came to a hedge side, and there they unarmed



Title-page of the first volume of Lord Berners' "Froissart," 1523

them, for they saw well the journey<sup>1</sup> was theirs: and certain of them set their banners and standards on the hedge, and the banner with the arms of Brittany on a bush, to draw their people thither. Then Sir John Chandos, Sir Robert Knolles, and other knights drew them to the Earl Mountfort, and smiling said to him, "Sir, laud God, and make

<sup>1</sup> Day.

good cheer, for ye have this day conquered the heritage of Bretagne." Then the Earl inclined himself right courteously, and said openly that every man might hear: "Ah, Sir John Chandos, this good adventure that is thus fallen to me is by the great wit and prowess that is in you, the which I know well and so do all those that be here. Sir, I pray you drink with me:" and took him a flagon of wine whereof he had drunk and refreshed him before, and moreover I said, "Sir, beside God, I ought to you the most thanks of any creature living." And therewith came to them Sir Oliver of Clisson, forchased<sup>1</sup> and inflamed, for he



Sir Thomas Elyot

*From an engraving by Bartolozzi after a drawing by Holbein*

had long pursued his enemies, so he had much pain to return again with his people, and brought with him many a prisoner. Then he came to the Earl of Mountfort, and alighted from his horse, and refreshed him. And in the same mean season there came to them two knights and two heralds, who had searched among the dead bodies to see if Sir Charles of Blois were dead or not. Then they said all openly, "Sir, make good cheer, for we have seen your adversary Sir Charles dead." Therewith the Earl of Mountfort arose, and said that he would go and see him, for he had as good will to see him dead as alive, and thither he went, and the knights that were about him. And when he was come to the place where he lay aside, covered under a shield, he caused him to be uncovered, and regarded him right piteously, and studied a certain space, and said, "Ah, Sir Charles, fair cousin, how that by your opinion<sup>2</sup> many a great mischief has fallen in Brittany, as God help me, it sore displeaseth me to find you thus; howbeit it can be none otherwise." And therewith he began to weep: then Sir John Chandos drew him back, and said, "Sir,

depart hence, and thank God of the fair adventure that is fallen to you, for without the death of this man ye could not come to the heritage of Bretagne." Then the Earl ordained that Sir Charles of Blois should be borne to Guingamp; and so he was incontinent with great reverence, and there buried honourably, as it appertained, for he was a good, true and valiant knight, and his body after sanctified by the grace of God, and called *Saint* Charles, and canonised by Pope Urban V.; for he did, and yet doth many fair miracles daily.

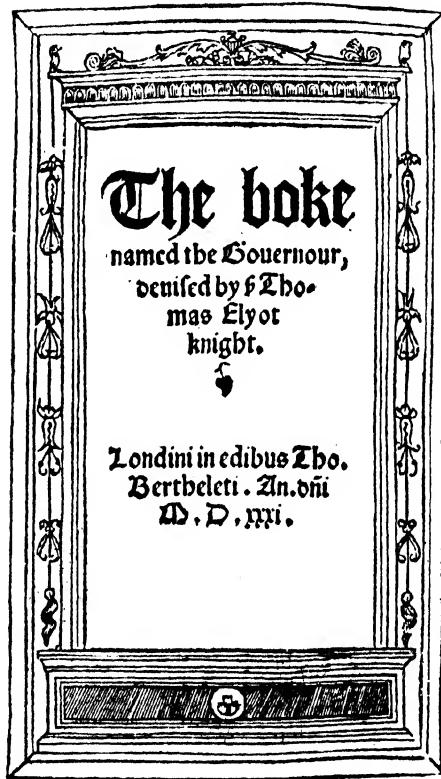
This is not quite authentic. Charles was believed to have worked miracles, and the Pope seemed disposed to canonise him; but his successful rival, fearing the obloquy of having killed a saint, interposed, and nothing was done.

<sup>1</sup> Spent with fatigue of the chase.

<sup>2</sup> Notwithstanding that by your claim to the duchy.

## CHRISTIAN AND SARACEN.

The Christian men would gladly have taken some Saracen to the intent to have known the state of their town and country, but for all their skirmishing they could never get none. The Saracens took good heed to themselves, and did pavesse<sup>1</sup> themselves against the cross-bows Genoese: they were not so well armed as the Christian men, it was not their usage, nor had they no armourers, nor metals to forge hammers withal, for most commonly they lack iron and steel: they be ever armed in leather, and bear targets about their necks covered and made of cure holy<sup>2</sup> of Cappadoce; no weapon can pierce it an the leather be not hot, so that when they come near to their enemies they cast their darts all at once; and when the Genoese do shoot at them, then they couch themselves low and cover themselves with their targets, and when the shot is past, they cast again their feathered darts. Thus the space of nine weeks during the siege they oftentimes skirmished, so that divers were hurt on both sides, and specially such as lightly without avisement adventured themselves. Thus the Christian men took good heed to themselves and so did the Saracens on their part, and the lords of France and such other as were come thither to their aid, gladly regarded the dealings of the Saracens. To say the truth, to lords of estate and to great men all novelties are delectable, and if the Christian men had pleasure to behold them, the Saracens had as great pleasure to regard the manner of the Christian men. Among them there were young lusty knights, who had great pleasure to behold the armour, banners, standards, and pennons, with richness and nobleness that was among the Christian men, and at night when they were at their lodgings they spoke and devised.



Title-page of Sir Thomas Elyot's "The Governour," 1531

SIR THOMAS ELYOT (1490?-1546) was an intimate friend of More, and, like him, affords a striking instance of the wide culture and various information of the eminent men at the court of Henry VIII. He was the son of a judge, Sir Richard Elyot. In his youth he studied medicine, which enabled him to write in mature years a medical work entitled *The Castle of Health*, which, not as unorthodox but as proceeding from a layman, was esteemed a grievous scandal by the Faculty. He was successively clerk of assize to his father, clerk of the privy council, ambassador on two occasions to Charles V., high sheriff, and Member of Parliament. He compiled a Latin-

<sup>1</sup> Provide themselves with *pavises*, i.e., large shields.

<sup>2</sup> Leather hardened by boiling, *cuir bouilli*.

English dictionary, and was active as a translator of moral and political works from various languages, but his reputation rests upon his *Governour* (1531). Even this treatise is to a considerable extent borrowed from Patrizi's *De Regno et Regis Institutione* (1518). It has, however, a wider scope, treating not merely of the education befitting a chief ruler, but of that befitting all persons of condition who may be called upon to act as governors. It thus throws much light on the general intellectual and social condition of England in the author's time, and for this, rather than for its precepts, it is still



Bishop Gardiner

*From an engraving after S. Harding*

valuable. It is nevertheless a work of great good sense, though sometimes amusingly pedantic, as when the writer observes that there is much good in chess, but would be much more if players would give their attention to the moralisation of the game, instead of merely trying to win it, as they commonly do, such is the infirmity of human nature ! The following passage reiterates a complaint of educationists in all ages :

The second occasion wherefrom gentlemen's children seldom have sufficient learning is avarice. For when their parents will not adventure to send them far out of their proper countries partly for fear of death, which perchance dare not approach them at home with their father ; partly for expense of money, which they suppose would be less in their own homes or

in a village, with some of their tenants or friends, having seldom any regard to the teacher, whether he be well learned or ignorant. For if they hire a scholar to teach in their houses they chiefly inquire with how small a salary he will be contented, and never do in search how much good learning he hath, and how among well learned men he is therein esteemed, using therein less diligence than in taking servants, whose service is of less importance, and to a good schoolmaster is not in profit to be compared. A gentleman, ere he take a cook into his service, he will first diligently examine him, how many sorts of meats, potages and sauces he can perfectly make, and how well he can season them, that they may be both pleasant and nourishing ; yes, and if it be but a falconer, he will scrupulously inquire what skill he hath in feeding, called diet, and keeping of his hawk from all sickness, also how he can redeem her and prepare her to flight. And to such a cook or falconer, whom he findeth expert, he spareth not to give much wages with other bounteous rewards. But of a schoolmaster, to whom he will commit his child to be fed with learning and instructed in virtue, whose life shall be the principal monument of his name and honour, he never maketh further enquiries but where he may have a schoolmaster, and with how little charge : and if one be perchance founden well learned, but he will not take pains to teach without he may have a great salary, he then speaketh nothing more, or else saith, What shall so much wages be given to a schoolmaster which would keep me two servants ?

It is noteworthy that the above was written near the beginning of the great movement which covered England with grammar schools. *The Governour* has been admirably edited by the late Mr. Croft, who has greatly increased its value by his annotations and illustrative citations.

Along with Elyot may be named two men chiefly eminent as politicians and educational reformers, though not destitute of merit as authors. SIR JOHN CHEKE (1514-1557) was tutor and afterwards Secretary of State to Edward VI., and may be enumerated among the Protestant martyrs under Mary, for although he seemed to have saved his life by recantation, remorse for his want of firmness shortened his days. His great merit, however, was his introduction of Greek studies into Cambridge in his quality of Regius Professor. The English system of pronouncing Greek was introduced and established by him, in spite of the violent opposition of Bishop Gardiner. His principal English work is political, *The Hurt of Sedition* (1549). THOMAS WILSON (1525) was like Cheke a scholar and a Secretary of State, but held office in the less perilous days of Elizabeth, having narrowly escaped martyrdom from the Inquisition at Rome. As Cheke reformed the study of Greek, so Wilson sought to correct the prevalent vices of English diction, in discourse as well as in books, by his *Art of Rhetoric* (1553): a useful treatise in its day, and now interesting in retrospect, but not distinguished by remarkable power or originality. He also wrote *The Rule of Reason, or Art of Logique* (1551). He was ambassador to Portugal and the Netherlands, and strove to thwart Spain in both capacities. His fine translation of the *Philippics* and *Olynthiacs* of Demosthenes taught England by the example of Athens and Philip of Macedon, how to deal with Philip of Spain.

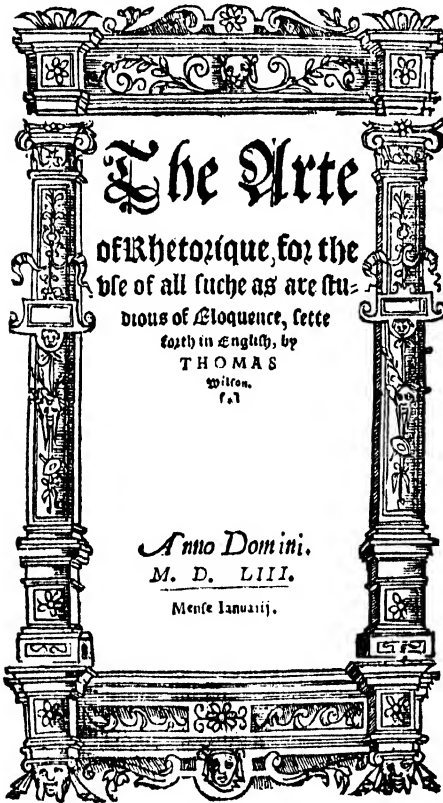


Sir John Cheke

From Holland's "*Herodologia*," 1620

**Roger Ascham** (1514-1568)—born in Yorkshire of a substantial yeoman's family in 1514, was one of the chief writers of his age, and his services to both English literature and English education are imperishable. Yet he is probably better known to the world at present by the one passage in his *Schoolmaster* in which he describes Lady Jane Grey studying Plato's *Phaedo* than by all the rest of his writings. There, and there only, he takes hold of the imagination: his literary work had, in general, a practical end which it accomplished so perfectly that nothing was left to keep it before the minds of the next generation. His championship of English as a literary medium

against Latin does him high honour, but ere long every one a reed with him. His prose style was in his own day an invaluable example to his contemporaries how to treat ordinary matters without bombast or pretension, but speedily became one instance among many. The very soundness of his educational views has made them commonplace through general acceptance; the interest of his work on archery, vital at the time of its composition, is now merely antiquarian. If, however, his influence has departed, his charm remains; he cannot be read anywhere without pleasure. His works reflect



Title-page of Wilson's "Arte of Rhetorique," 1553

his history, the life of a man dear to all and honoured by all, at the cost, it may be, of some compliances which one would not judge with too much severity. In his youth he had stood by Sir John Cheke in the reformation of University studies, especially Greek; yet in after years he owed to the intercession of Cheke's opponent, Bishop Gardiner, the post of secretary to Queen Mary with the unheard of privilege of remaining a Protestant. He had previously been tutor to the Princess Elizabeth, and may claim a large share of the merit of forming her mind, as well as adorning it with accomplishments. After her accession he was again in confidential relations with her, and had ample experience both of her partiality and her parsimony. He died in 1568, while writing his *Schoolmaster*.

Ascham's literary reputation rests upon this work, upon his *Toxophilus*, and upon his unique position as the first English exemplar of polished epistolary composition. The *Toxophilus*, written in 1543 and 1544, has still value as a practical treatise on

archery, but now that archery has become a mere pastime is chiefly remarkable as a monument of the system of national defence in Tudor times, prototype of the Volunteer movement in our own, and as symbolising that close alliance between learning and manly sport which has always characterised English education. It takes, nevertheless, a wider range, and exhibits Ascham in a favourable light as the practical and impressive moralist:—

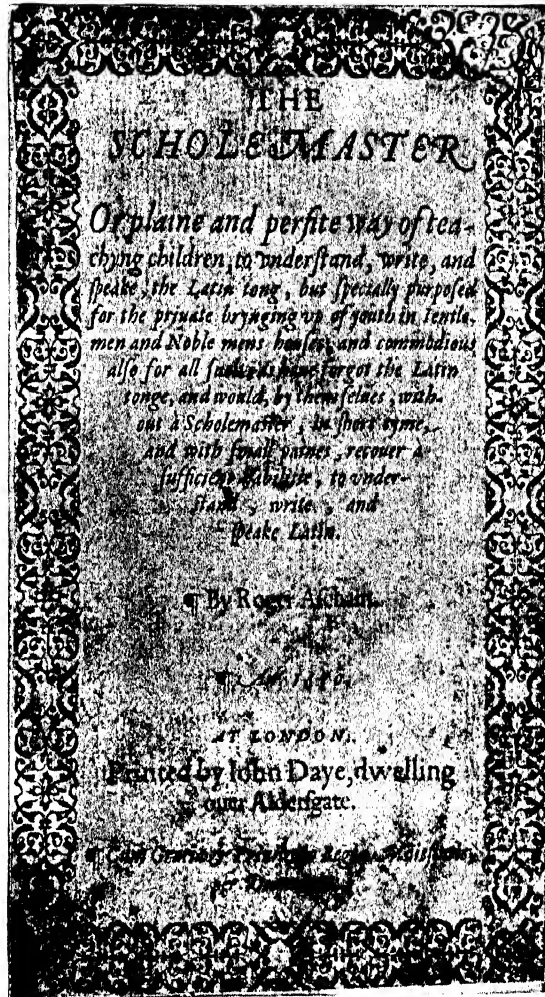
Take heed, therefore, ye great ones in the court, yea, though ye be the greatest of all, take heed what ye do; take heed how ye live; for as ye great ones use to do, so all mean men love to do. You be indeed makers or marrers of all men's manners within the realm. For though God has placed you to be chief in making of laws, to bear greatest authority, to command all others; yet God doth order that all y ur laws, all your authority, all your commandments do not half so much with mean men as doth your example

and manner of living. And for example, even in the greatest matter, if you yourselves do serve God gladly and orderly for conscience sake, not coldly, and sometime for manner sake, you carry all the court with you, and the whole realm beside, earnestly and orderly to do the same. If you do otherwise, you be the only authors of all disorder in religion, not only to the Court, but to all England beside. Infinite shall be made cold by your example that were never hurt by reading of books.

The form of *Toxophilus* is a dialogue, which may well have given a hint to Izaak Walton. It has nothing of Walton's poetical charm, but is not unenlivened by humour. In speaking of the proper kind of feather for fledging arrows, Ascham after observing that peacock's feathers, though sometimes "taken up for pleasure," are apt to be "laid down for profit," and that eagles' feathers may do extremely well for Hercules, breaks out into the panegyric of a humbler fowl:—

Well fare the gentle goose, which bringeth to a man, even to his door, so many exceeding commodities. For the goose is a man's comfort in war and in peace, sleeping and waking. What praise soever is given to shooting, the goose may challenge the best part in it.

Ascham's *Schoolmaster* grew out of a conversation on the case of some Eton boys who had run away from school to escape a flogging. It naturally has much to say on the advantage of gentle methods in education, where the writer displays an enlightened spirit in advance of his time. The technical portion is equally judicious, he deprecates overburdening the mind with grammatical rules which must fail to interest the youthful imagination, and recommends constant exercise in translation in their place. Almost all his educational precepts have found acceptance—the width of view by



Title-page of Ascham's "Schoolmaster"

which he considers education as embracing not merely school learning, but all culture of mind and body, is perhaps even more in advance of our day than of his own. When, however, he ascends from the schoolboy to the poet he offers a pregnant illustration of the maxim *ne sutor ultra crepidam*. Treating of prosody, he expresses a fervent aspiration that Englishmen "would acknowledge and understand rightfully our rude beggarly rhyming, brought into Italy by Goths and Huns, when all good verse and all good learning too were destroyed by them."<sup>1</sup> To employ rhyme in his own more enlightened day, he thinks, "were even to eat acorns with swine, when



Lady Jane Grey, a pupil of Ascham's  
From Holland's "Herologia," 1620

we may freely eat wheat bread amongst men." He admits, indeed, that "*carmen hexametrum* doth rather trot and hobble than run smoothly in our English tongue. Yet I am sure our English tongue will receive *carmen iambicum*." If he means the blank verse introduced by Surrey, he is so far right; but Surrey would have looked blanker than his verse at a proposal to rewrite his lyrics in it.

Ascham's pedantry on this point is the more surprising as he had given proof of his superiority to erudite prejudice by preferring, when sure of being understood, English to Latin as the medium of his correspondence. Whether in English or in Latin his letters are always excellent; in the latter equal to the best

of his time; in the former he for a long time stands alone. Between 1550 and 1553 he was engaged on a mission to Germany, and his descriptions of Rhineland scenery bring it vividly before the eye.

By much the most important English literary undertaking of the age was the translation of the Bible from the original tongues, forming a great advance upon the Wycliffite versions from the Vulgate. It will be convenient to defer notice of this until we are enabled to consider the subject as a whole upon arriving at the authorised version of 1611, but something should be said here of the two men principally connected with it in the age of Henry VIII., one of whom ranks among the foremost Englishmen of his age. This, it hardly need be added, was WILLIAM TYNDALE (1490-1536), a man of the highest and purest character, of Greek and even Hebrew scholarship adequate to his great task, and endowed with such natural taste and power of diction as to be justly

<sup>1</sup> So Cobbett in the *Rejected Addresses*: "The gewgaw fetters of rhyme, invented by the monks in the middle ages to enslave the people."



credited with the highest merit of all who have contributed to the matchless beauty of the English Bible. His personal share in the work was the translation of the New Testament, the Pentateuch and the Book of Jonah, but he is believed to have made other translations which did not see the light. After his martyrdom his mantle fell in a measure upon MILES COVERDALE (1488–1568), afterwards for a time Bishop of Exeter, but who from conscientious motives renounced the see. Coverdale could not, like Tyndale, have recourse

to the original tongues, but his felicity of language added much to the merit of the version as ultimately settled. He is also entitled to the highest credit for his assiduous promotion of the cause until the translation was at length provisionally adopted by royal authority: and even if the offences of Henry's unhappy minister Cromwell were as black as they have sometimes been represented, it may be deemed sufficient atonement that the expense of the Great Bible of 1539 was wholly borne by him. The numerous literary and bibliographical questions involved in this most interesting history must be reserved for the present. Coverdale was not like Tyndale a man of heroic mould, but has been justly characterised as "pious, conscientious, laborious, generous, and thoroughly honest and good." The vast advance which a nation may make in a short time is strikingly illustrated by two proclamations of Henry VIII., the first forbidding the Scriptures to be read in the vernacular, the second ordering a copy of the English Bible to be placed in every parish church.

The age of Henry VIII. could not fail to abound in works of religious controversy, many of which may in point of composition be classed among the best writings of the time, but to which no great amount of space can be devoted in our pages. If, as usually believed, ARCHBISHOP CRANMER was the author or translator of a large portion of the Prayer Book, he surpassed every contemporary in beauty of diction, but his acknowledged writings are not very important. Next to him in distinction comes William Tyndale, whose

# The gospel of S. Mathew. The first Chapter.



## Thys ys the boke of

the generaciō of Ihesus Christ the sonne of David. The forme also of Abrahā and Isaac. The forme also of Jacob. The forme also of Judas and hys bretheren. The forme also of Phares and Joram of israhel. The forme also of Phares. The forme also of Joram. The forme also of Aminadab.

Aminadab begatt naassan:  
Naasson begatt Salmon:  
Salmon begatt boos of rhabab:  
Boos begatt obed of ruth:  
Obed begatt Jesse:

Jesse begatt david the kyng:  
David the kyng begatt Solomon of her that was the wyfe of vyrg:

Solomon begatt roboam:  
Reboam begatt Abia:  
Abia begatt asa:  
Asa begatt iosephat:  
Iosephat begatt Joram  
Joram begatt Othias:  
Othias begatt Joatham:  
Joatham begatt Achas:  
Achas begatt Ezechias:  
Ezechias begatt Manasse:  
Manasse begatt Amon:  
Amon begatt Josias:  
Josias begatt Jechonias and his bretheren about the tyme of the captivite of babilon

After they were led captivite to babilon / Jechonias begatt the childer of the wyfe of the king of babilon

Saynt matthew leved out certen yere generaciōs / 2 describeth the lineage from solomon after the lawe of David / but Lucas describeth it according to nature / for he saith that solomon broghten forth the childer of the king of babilon / which his brother begatt of his wyfe after he was led captivite to babilon

The first page of Tyndale's Gospel of St. Matthew

From the New Testament printed at Cologne, 1525

contributions to the Reformation controversy are of great moment. In his *Parable of the Wicked Mammon* (1528) he betrays, like Wycliffe, a leaning towards socialistic views, but does not carry them to any alarming extent. *The Obedience of a Christian Man* defends the Reformers from the charge of disobedience to magistrates, and upholds the royal authority so strongly as to have gained the marked approbation of Henry VIII., which Tyndale forfeited by his next work, *The Practise of Prelates* (1530), in which he condemned the royal divorce. His latter years were distinguished by a controversy with



William Tyndale

From Holland's "Heroologia," 1620

More, conducted with equal ability and equal scurrility on both sides. The excitement under which all participants in religious strife laboured in this age undoubtedly did much to stimulate energy of composition, and was sometimes productive of real eloquence. It would be difficult to find better specimens of manly, nervous English than Bishop Ponet's translation of Ochino's *Divine Tragedy* (1549) on one side, or Bishop Fisher's *St. Paul's Sermon against Luther* (1521) on the other. The only writer of the class, however, who can be held to have gained a permanent place in literature, apart from controversy, is another Bishop, a martyr like Fisher, but on the opposite side, Hugh Latimer (1485?-1555). His claim to literary celebrity does not rest upon literary ability, but on a style uncommon in his day, and which few but himself would then have ventured to employ from the pulpit, homely, quaint, racy, brimful of humour so well controlled as never to verge upon buffoonery. An excellent example is the well-known passage in which he seeks to shame idle prelates by the salutary example of the devil:—

But here some man will say to me, "What, Sir, are ye so privy of the devil's counsel that ye know all this to be true?" Truth I know him too well, and have obeyed him a little too much in condescending to some follies. And I know him as other men do, that he is ever occupied and ever busy in following his plough. I know it by St. Peter, which saith of him, *Sicut leo rugiens circuit quaerens quem devoret*. . . He goeth about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. I would have this text well viewed and examined, every word of it. *Circuit*, he goeth about in every corner of his diocese. He goeth on visitation daily. He leaveth no place of his cure unvisited. He walketh round about from

place to place and ceaseth not. *Sicut leo* as a lion ; that is, strongly, boldly, and proudly, straightly and fiercely, with haut looks, with his proud countenance, with his stately braggings. *Rugiens*, roaring, for he letteth not slip any occasion to speak or to roar out when he seeth his time. *Quaerens*, he goeth about seeking and not sleeping, as our bishops do, but he seeketh diligently, he searcheth diligently all corners whereas he may have his prey, he roveth abroad in every place of his diocese, he standeth not still, he is never at rest, but ever in hand with his plough that it may go forward. But there was never such a preacher in England as he is.

History and political science, though doubtless much meditated upon, were little written upon in the days of the early Tudors. The latter was a perilous subject, but it certainly might have been expected that some historian would have arisen ; yet the history of England was left to an eminent Italian then resident among us, Polydore Vergil, and no chronicler even appears except the worthy Fabyan and Hall, who will be considered with other chroniclers of a later date. Politics and history were nevertheless united in some measure



Miles Coverdale

From an engraving by Trotter

the sovereign, drawn up by himself under the title of *The Pilgrim*, was issued at the time in Italian, but the English original remained unpublished until long

## The Pract<sup>e</sup> tyle of prelates.

Compyled by the ffaithfull  
and Godlye learned man,  
Wylliam Tyndale.  
dale.

## IMPRINTED

at London by Anthony Scoloker.  
And Wylliam Seres. Wholes  
lyng in the Sauoy reures  
Wylhouse Temple:  
barre.

*Cum Privilegio ad Imprimendum solum.*

Title-page of Tyndale's "Practice of  
Prelates"

by the Welshman WILLIAM THOMAS, who, in 1554, "constrained by misfortune to abandon the place of his nativity," proceeded to Italy, and turned his travels to account by producing a compendium of Italian history, especially designed to show England "how a nation that had been enriched by peace and concord had been made poor by strife," but even more remarkable as an antiquarian guide, and especially for the writer's meditations among the ruins of Rome. Thomas also wrote the first Italian grammar for English use, combined with a dictionary. Upon the news of the death of Henry VIII. arriving at Bologna Thomas represents himself as drawn into a discussion with some Italian gentlemen respecting the character of the deceased monarch. His apology for his

afterwards. To the fourteen counts of the indictment brought by the Italians against Henry, Thomas replies with a spirit and force which entitle him to an honourable place among the good prose writers of his time, and, having refuted them one by one, he winds up with a glowing panegyric :—

Prudent he was in counsel and forecasting, most liberal in rewarding his faithful servants, and ever unto his enemies as it behoveth a prince to be. He was learned in all sciences, and had the gift of many tongues ; he was a perfect theologian, a good philosopher and a strong man at arms ; a jeweller, a perfect builder of fortresses as well as of pleasant

palaces, and from one to another there was no necessary kind of knowledge from a king's decree to a carter's but that he had an honest sight in it. He was undoubtedly the rarest man that lived in his time. But I say not this to make him a god, nor in all his doings I will not say he hath been a saint. I will confess that he did many evil things as the publican sinner, but not as a cruel tyrant, or as a pharisaical hypocrite ; for all his doings were open to the whole world, wherein he governed himself with so much reason, prudence, courage and circumspection, that I wot not where in all the histories I have read to find one king equal to him.



Thomas Cranmer

*After the portrait by G. Fliccius*

*The Pilgrim* also contains interesting information respecting the English export of woollen goods, the so-called Flemish cloth being, Thomas says, all made in England ; of coal, which he calls a *metal* ; and of beer,

which, having according to the rhyme come into England not long before, was then streaming out again. Returning to England, Thomas was made a clerk to the Privy Council, but perished in the Wyatt insurrection of the following year, protesting that he died for his country.

The death of Sir Thomas More may in some respects well be compared to the death of Socrates, and, to complete the parallel, it found a Crito and a Phædo in the narrative of his son-in-law, WILLIAM ROPER (1496–1578), the only biographical writer of any account who wrote under Henry VIII., as no doubt he did, although his work was not published until 1626. Not only in the pathetic description of More's death, to which reference has been made, but everywhere it is a model of good taste and good feeling. The author

was prothonotary of the Court of King's Bench, which office his amiable disposition and caution in his dealings with the ruling powers enabled him to

ms. A. 9. 2. 1. 1  
1537  
13 Aug.  
Cranmer

To veray singular good Lord, in my moche hartie woorshipp I comend  
me unto you. And wher as I understande that yo<sup>r</sup>  
Lorde ship at my requeste hath not only prohibited the Libell w<sup>ch</sup>  
I sent unto you. to the Kinge maistie, but also hath contrived  
of his grace that the same shalbe allowed by his autoritie to  
be broughte and redde nam the realme. My Lorde for the  
your paynt taken in this behalf I give unto you my most  
hartie thankes. assigninge your Lorde ship for the recovery  
of my mynde, you have shewed me more pleasee then I  
if you hadd given me a thousand pounde. And I doubt not,  
but that herebye shalbe fownde of good knowledge shalbe inferred  
that it shalbe well apperce hereafter what good and help  
table shunt you have done unto godde and the Kinge, wherfor  
shall praye redoubt to your good. That, as for godde reward  
you shall enjoye perpetuall memorye for the same nam the  
realme, and as for me. you maye receive me your bondman  
and I dare be bold to say, so maye ye do my Lord of Norwicke  
and my Lorde. Right hartely shunt you now. I shal  
afford the xij day. of Auguste

Yo<sup>r</sup> Obedient bondman and  
Cantuariey

Autograph Letter from Cranmer to Thomas Cromwell

British Museum MS. Cleopatra, E. 5

preserve until his death, notwithstanding his adherence to the ancient religion.

It would be impossible to omit the name of JOHN LELAND, the antiquary (1506?-1552), for few writers of Henry VIII.'s time have laid posterity under more substantial obligations. He can hardly, however, claim to rank as a

man of letters, for the collections he had laboriously amassed in nine years' perustration of England were never digested into the great work on the *History and Antiquities of the Nation* which he contemplated. His *Itinerary* and his *Collectanea* or assemblage of miscellaneous notes were, however, published at Oxford in the eighteenth century by a kindred spirit, Thomas Hearne. He has been called "the father of English antiquaries," and few of his posterity have excelled him.



Hugh Latimer

*After the portrait in the National Portrait Gallery*

Near the beginning of Henry VIII.'s reign, and for some time afterwards, the surveyor of the field of English poetry might have reported with Porson at an equally dull period, "Poetis nos laetamur tribus." No particular resemblance can be traced between Stephen Hawes and Alexander Barclay on the one hand and Pye and "parvus Pybus" on the other; but the affinity between **John Skelton** and Peter Pindar is anything but fanciful. Like Peter Pindar, Skelton claims a place in literature in virtue of sheer vigour and originality. He is little of a poet, and it probably cost him little to throw aside the traditions which had come down from a poetical age, but by so doing he distinguishes himself from his feeble contemporaries, and might have

claimed to rank as the first English satiric poet if his lampoons had attained the dignity of satire. His early history seems at variance with his later career. Born about 1460, he began by writing an elegy on Edward IV., became a noted scholar at Oxford, making translations from the Latin which have not been published, was one of Henry VIII.'s tutors in his childhood, was rewarded with the living of Diss in Norfolk, and straightway became a clerical Bohemian, a thorn in his bishop's side, but also a poet. The probability is that he had always lived a free life, and could not accustom himself to the decorum incumbent upon a parish priest. A collection of jests and practical jokes attributed to him, though not one may be authentic, sufficiently indicate his general repute. He, notwithstanding, held his ground, partly perhaps from the favour of the King, for whose amusement he is said to have written his scurrilous verses on Sir Christopher Garneys, and his humorous but extravagantly coarse *Tunning of Eleanor Rummyng*. At length, however, for some unexplained provocation, he took to lampoon-

ing Wolsey, whom he assailed in his *Colin Clout, Why Come Ye not to Court?* and *Speak Parrot*. Wolsey seems to have shown more long-suffering than could have been expected, but at last Skelton was obliged to seek sanctuary in Westminster, where he died in 1529.

Although the strictly poetical value of Skelton's work is small, he commands respect by his rude vigour and his opulence of ideas. He has more to say than he knows how to express, and in the effort to deliver himself hits upon a short metre which no one had used before him, perilously near doggerel but not entirely unworthy of the praise awarded to it by the elder Disraeli: "In the quick-returning rhymes, the playfulness of the diction, and the pungency of new words, usually ludicrous, often expressive, and sometimes felicitous, there is a stirring spirit which will be best felt in an audible reading." It is difficult to render this description of poetry any justice by quotation, for the affluence of the bard's ideas and the facility of his metre combine to render him interminable. In *Philip Sparrow*, the lament of a nun for the death of her pet, foully slaughtered by a cat (a theme handled with more brevity in the Greek Anthology), the lady having once remarked that she is unable to do justice to her subject for lack of learning, confirms the assertion by naming half the authors of repute who had flourished down to Skelton's time. The following is but a fragment of the Kehama-like imprecation pronounced upon Philip's murderer, the maleficent cat:—



John Leland

*After an engraving by Grignon of  
the bust at All Souls*

Of Inde the greedy gypes<sup>1</sup>  
Might tear out all thy tripes !  
Of Arcady the bears  
Might pluck away thine ears !  
The wild wolf Lycaon  
Bite asunder thy back bone !  
Of Etna the burning hill  
That day and night burneth still,  
Set in thy tail a blaze,  
That all the world may gaze  
And wonder upon thee,  
From Ocean the great sea  
Unto the Isle of Orcady,  
From Tilbury ferry  
To the plain of Salisbury !  
So traitorously my bird to kill  
That never wrought thee evil will !

<sup>1</sup> Griffins.

It is not remarkable that the author of reams of verse of this description, much of it the vehicle of the grossest personal abuse, should have passed with the next generation for "a rude, railing rhymers." Skelton has, nevertheless, the merit of being always racy when others are insipid, and may be fairly regarded as a rough prototype of another indecorous clergyman, Churchill, with a power of picturesque personification denied to the latter. This is particularly apparent in his allegorical poem, *The Garland of Laurel*,



John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester

*From a drawing by Holbein in the British Museum*

on the presentation of a laurel wreath to himself, and *The Borge (bouche) of Court*, in which the vices incidental to Court life are mercilessly satirised. There is great energy in this representation of Riot :—

With that came Riot, rushing all at once,  
 A rusty gallant, to-ragged and to-rent ;  
 And on the board he whirled a pair of bones,  
*Quater tréye deus* he clattered as he went ;  
 " Now have at all, by St. Thomas of Kent."  
 And ever he threw and cast, I wot ne'er what.  
 His hair was growen thorough out his hat.



Seinte Junii. Anno regni meti in dñi dñi regis Henrici octavi. xxi.

A proclamation made and dycted by the kyngis highnes. With the aduile of his honorable counsaile, for dampning of erroneous booke and heresies, and prohibitinge the hauinge of booke scrip-  
sure, translated into the bulgar tonges of englishe, frenche, or durche, in such  
manner, as with this proclamation is expresse.



The kinge our most vyadde soueraigne lord, Audiencie and prouidyng Daply for the weale, benefite, and honour of this his most noble realme, well and euidently perceiuet, that partly through the malicious suggestion of our godly enemy, partly by the puelle and peruerse inclination and scidicious disposition of sundry persons, diuers heresies and erroneous opinions haue ben late sowne and spredde amonge his subiectes of this his said realme, by blasphemous and perisferous englishe booke, printed in other regions, and sent in to this realme, to the intent as well to peruerse and withpawne the people from the catholike and true sayth of Childe, as also to stirre and incense them to rebellion and disobedience agaynst their princes, soueraignes, and heedes, as also to cause them to contempne and neglect all good lawes, customes, and vertuous manners, to the final subuersion and desolation of this noble realme, if they myght haue perswaped (whiche god forbode) in theyr most cursed perswasions and malicious purposes. Where upon the kynges highnes, by his incomparable wysdome, wispryng and most prouidently consideryng, hath inuited and called to hym the prymates of this his gracye realme, and also a sufficient nombre of discrete vertuous and well lerned personages in diuinite, as well of either of the vniuersities, Oxforde and Cambrige, as also hath chosyn and taken out of other parties of his realme; gpyng into them libertie, to speke and declare playnly their aduises, iudgements, and determinations, concernyng as well the approbation or reseyryng of suche booke as be in any parte suspectid, as also the admission and diuulgation of the olde and newe testamēt, translated in to englishe. Where upon his highnes, in his owne topall person, callinge to hym the said prymates and diuines, hath seriously and depely, with great leisure and longe deliberation, consulted, debated, inschered, and discussid the premises: and finally, by all their free assentes, consentes, and agrementes, concluded, resolved, and determined, that these booke ensuyng, That is to say, the boke entituled the wicked Hammona, the boke named the Obedience of a Christen man, the Supplication of beggars, and the boke called the Reuelation of Antichrist, the Sumary of scripture, and diuers other booke made in the englishe tonge, and imprinted beyonde the see, do cōterpne in them perisferous errors and blasphemies: and for that cause, shall from hensforth be reputed and taken of all men, for booke of heresie, and worthy to be dampned, and put in perpetual obliuion. The kynges said highnes therfore straitly chargeth and commaundeth all and euery his subiectes, of what state or condition so euer they be, as they will auoyde his high indignacion, and most gretuous displeasure, that they from hensforth, do not byr, receyue, or haue any of the booke before named, or any other boke, bringe in the englishe tonge, and printed beyonde the see, of what matter so euer it be, or any copie written, drawen out of the same, or the same booke in the frenche or durche tonge. And to the intent that his highnes myghte ascerpne, what nombre of the sayd erroneous booke shalbe soude to tyme to tyme within this his realme, his highnes therfore chargeth and commaundeth, that all and euery person or persons, whiche hath or hereafter shall haue, any booke or booke in the englishe tonge, printed beyonde the see, as is afore writen, or any of the sayde erroneous booke in the frenche or durche tonge: that he or they, within fyfene dayes nexte after the publicyng of this present proclamation, do actually deliuer or sende the same booke and euery of them, to the bisshop of the diocese, wherein he or they dwelleth, or to his commissary, or els before good testimonie, to theyr curate or parische priest, to be persued by the same curate or parische priest, to the sayd bisshop or his commissary. And so dopnyng, his highnes seip pardoneth and acquiteth them, and euery of them, of all penalties, forfaitures, and paynes, wher in they haue incurred or fallen, by reason of any statute, acte, ordynance, or proclamation before this tyme made, concernyng any offence or transgression by them committed or done, by or for the keepyng or holdyng of the sayde booke.

Proclamation of Henry VIII. forbidding the English Bible to be used in the churches

Then I beheld how he disguised was :

His head was heavy for watching over night,

His eyen bleared, his face shone like a glass ;

His gown so short that it ne cover might

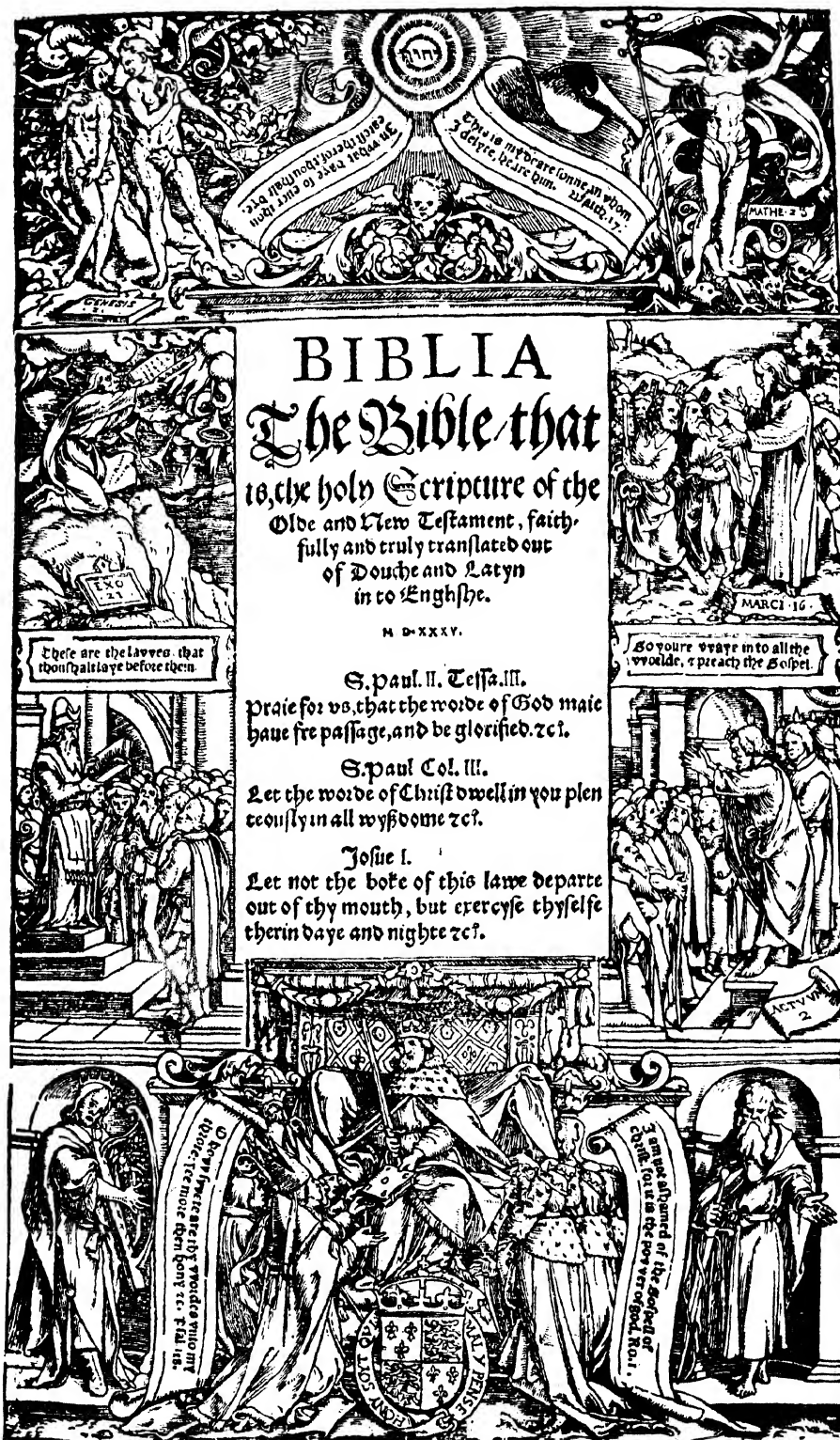
His rump, he went so all for summer light.

His hose were garded with a liste of grene,

Yet at the knees they were broken, I ween.

Skelton's dramatic morality, *Magnificence*, will be best considered along with the general subject of the primitive English drama.

STEPHEN HAWES (1475 ?—1523 ?) resembled Skelton in nothing but being



Title-page of the Bible of 1535

a Court poet, and a university man. Skelton is a bold innovator: Hawes writes much as Lydgate might have written if he had lived under the Tudors and gained additional refinement by study, foreign travel and employment at Court. It was while groom of the chamber to Henry VII. that Hawes produced his principal poem, *The Pastime of Pleasure* (1506), a long allegory of the course of human life, commencing under the auspices of the seven liberal studies, personified as nymphs inhabiting "The Tower of Doctrine" and, after the prescribed amount of giant-slaying and successful wooing, ending by the repulse of Old Age, Policy, and Avarice, by the aid of Contrition and Conscience. The poem is dull as a whole, but possesses some importance in literary history as a connecting link between Lydgate and Spenser, and has occasional gleams of poetry, as when the hero of the allegory leads his lady forth to dance in the tower of Music:—



Title-page of Henry VIII.'s book against Luther

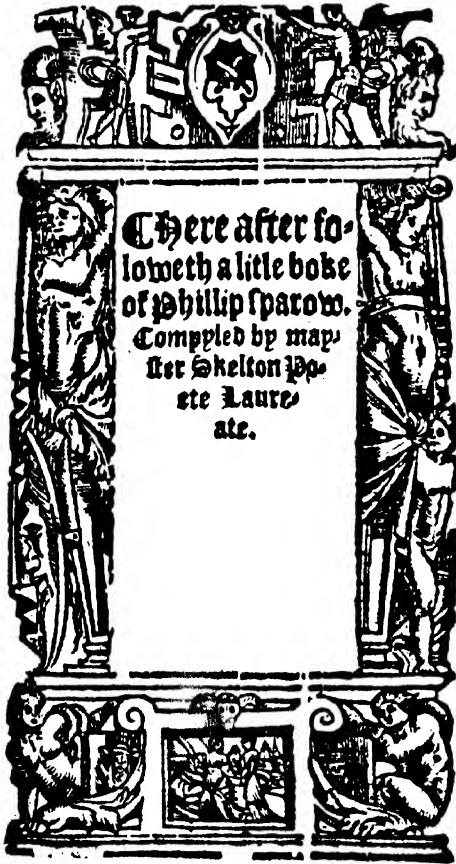
By her propre handé, soft as any silk,  
 With due observance I did her then take.  
 Her skin was white as whale's bone or milk.  
 My thought was ravished, I might not aslake  
 My burning herté, she the fire did make.  
 These dances truly Music hath me taught  
 To lute or dance, but it availeth nought.

For the fire kindled, and waxed more and more  
 The dancing blew it; with her beauty clear  
 My heart sickened and began to wax sore;  
 A minute six hours, and six hours a year  
 I thought it was, so heavy was my cheer,  
 And yet to cover my great love aright,  
 The outward countenance I made glad and light.

And for fear mine eyes should mine heart bewray,  
 I took my leave and to a temple went,  
 And all alone I to myself did say :  
 Alas ! what fortune hath me hither sent !  
 To devoyde<sup>1</sup> my joy and my heart torment  
 No man can tell how great a pain it is,  
 But if<sup>2</sup> he will feel it, as I do y-wis.<sup>3</sup>

Hawes wrote several short prose works which are lost, or exist in only one

or two printed copies. He appears to have obtained the favour of Henry VIII., and to have written a play for representation at Court about 1520. He probably died soon afterwards.



Title-page of Skelton's "Little Boke of Phillip Sparow"

It has been much disputed whether **Alexander Barclay** (1475? 1552) was an Englishman or a Scotchman, but his name, the testimony of Scotch writers near his time and allusion, in his own works, leave little doubt of his Scotch origin. The circumstance of his being presented to a priesthood in the College of Ottery St. Mary, about 1506, by Bishop Cornish, who was then Provost of Oriel, suggests the probability of his having been educated at Oriel College. He would seem to have previously travelled in France and Italy. In 1509 he published his principal work, the translation, with considerable additions, of Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff or Ship of Fools*, then immensely popular throughout Europe; partly, as Brant's biographer thinks, from the excellence of the woodcuts, partly as the first modern example of good-humoured satire.

About 1511 he became a Benedictine monk at Ely, where he wrote his eclogues about 1515. From this he passed to the Franciscan monastery at Canterbury. After the dissolution of the monasteries, acquiescing, as it would seem, in the religious changes then taking place, he was presented to benefices in Essex and Somersetshire, and died at Croydon in 1552, a few weeks after his institution to the important city rectory of All Hallows, Lombard Street.

Barclay was a prolific author, but his only writings of importance are *The Ship of Fools* (1509); *The Eclogues* (undated, but before 1520), and a translation

<sup>1</sup> Destroy.

<sup>2</sup> Unless.

<sup>3</sup> Certainly.

# A proclamation, ordeyned by the Kynges ma-

iestie, with the aduise of his honourable counsaile for the Bpble of the largest and  
greatest volume, to be had in euery church. Deuiled the. vi. day of May the..  
x x x l i i i. yeaere of the kynges moste gracious reygne.



Here, by Inlunctions heretofore set forth by the auctoritie of the kynges to all maiestie,  
Supreme head of the church of this his realme of Englande. It was ordeyned and com-  
maunded amongst other thynges, that in al and singular parlyche churches, there shulde be  
prouyded by a certen day now expyred, at the costes of the Curates and parsonages, By-  
bles conteynyng the olde and newe Testament, in the Englyshe toungue, to be fynyed and set  
by openyng in euery of the sayd parlyche churches. The whiche Godly commaundement and Inlunction was  
to the onely intent that euery of the kynges maiesties louynge subiectes, myndynge to reade therein, myghte by  
ocasyon therof, not only consyder and perceyue the great and ineffable omnipotent power, prynciple, iustice, mercy  
and goodnes of Almyghty God. But also to learne thereby to obserue Gods commaundementes, and to obeye  
theyr foueraygne Lord and hygher powers, and to excepte Godly charite, and to be them selues, accordynge to  
theyr vocations: in a pure and sincere chastyte lyf without mixture of grudgynges. By the which Inlunctions  
the kynges to all maiestie intended, that his louynge subiectes shulde haue and vse the commodite of the tra-  
dyng of the sayde Bibles, for the purpose aboue reherced, humbly, meekely, reuerently and obediently: and not  
that any of them shulde reade the sayde Bibles, wryth lowde and hygher boyses, in tyme of the celebracion of the  
holye Masse and other dyuine seruyces bled in the church, nor that any hys laye subiectes redynge the same,  
shulde presume to take vpon them, any common dysputacyon, argumente or expocicion of the mysteries therein  
conteyned, but that euery suche laye man shulde humbly, meekely and reuerently reade the same, for his owne in-  
struction, edificacion, and amendement of hys lyf, accordynge to goddes holy wyrd therein mencioned. And not  
wythstandynge the kynges sayde moost godly and gracious commaundement and Inlunction in forme as is  
aforesayde, hys to all maiestie is informed that dyuers and many Townes and parishes wythin this hys  
realme haue negligently emptyed thei dueeties in the accomplisment therof wherof his hyghnes maruailously  
not a lytle. And myndynge the execution of his sayde former, moost godly and gracious Inlunctions doeth  
straitly charge and commaunde that the Curates and parsonages of euery towne and parlyche wythin this  
hys realme of Englande, not haunynge already Bibles prouyded wythin theyr parlyche churches. Shall on this  
fynde the feast of Allsantes next comynge, bye and prouyde Bibles of the largest and greatest volume, & cause  
the same to be set and fynyed in euery of the sayde parlyche churches, there to be bled as is aforesayd: accordynge to  
the sayde former Inlunctions: vpon payne that the Curate and inhabitauntes of the parishes and townes, shal  
lose and forsaite to the kynges maiestie, for euery moneth that they shall lacke and want the sayde Bibles, after  
the same feast of Allsantes fortythyllynge, the one halfe of the same forsaite to be to the kynges maiestie, & the  
other halfe to hym or the whiche shall fynde and present the same to the kynges maiesties counsaile. And  
fynally, the kynges to all maiestie doeth declare and sgnifye to all and singular his louynge subiectes, that to  
thentent they maye haue the sayde Bibles of the greatest volume at equall and reasonable pcyces. Whis hyghnes  
by the aduise of hys counsaile hath ordeyned and tared: that the sellers therof, shall not take for any of the sayde  
Bibles vnbounde, about the pcyce of ten shyllynge. And for euery of the sayde Bibles well and sufficientely,  
bounde, tyymmed and clasped, not about twelue shyllynge, vpon payne, the seller to lose for euerye Bysble tolde  
contrary to this his hyghnes proclamation fortythyllynge, the one mozte therof to the kynges maiestie: & the  
other mozte, to the fynder and presenter of the defaulte, as is aforesayde. And his hyghnes strenghtly chargeth &  
commaundeth that all and singular ordinaries haunynge ecclesiasticall iurisdiction wythin this his church and  
realme of Englande and the dominion of Wales, that they & euery of them shall put theyr effectuell endeuours,  
that the Curates and parsonages shall obeye and accomplyshe, this his maiesties proclamation and commaun-  
dement, as they tendre the aduancement of the kynges moost gracious and godly purpose in that behalfe, and  
as they will answer to his hyghnes for the same.

¶ GOD SAVE THE KYNGE.

Ex. iussu per Richardum Grafon et Edwardum VVinchurch.  
Cum privilegio ad imprimendum solum

Proclamation of Henry VIII. ordering the English Bible to be used  
in all churches

of Sallust's *Jugurthine War*. It cannot be said that he is a poet in any true sense of the word. His version of the *Narrenschiff* is not made from the original German, but from the Latin version of Locherus; he is entitled to credit for the skill which he has shown in breaking up the hexameters into English rhyme royal: if, as the German biographer of Brant confesses, the original was entirely devoid of poetry, Barclay was not the man to bring what he did not find. The following, from the speech of the book collector who passes for a learned man on the strength of his library, is a fair specimen of Barclay's manner:—

## Cryght delectable tytle vpon a goodly Gar

Imprynted by Laurell up mapster Skelton Boece  
lambert Cuopoullp dupled at Shepheardson Castell. In  
þe torelle of galices/wherein at cōpyppre manp & dpuce  
colacpous & tpyght pzeugnant alleccpures of spngular plea-  
sure/as moze at large it doth apere in þe pces folowynge.



Title-page of Skelton's "Goodly Garlande"

That in this ship the chief place I govérn,  
By this wide sea with foolés wandering  
The cause is plain and easy to discern;  
Still I am busy books assembling,  
For to have plenty it is a pleasant thing,  
In my conceyt, to have them ay in hand;  
But what they mean do I not understand.

But yet I have them in great reverence  
And honour, saving them from filth and  
ordure,  
By often brushing and much diligence,  
Full goodly bound in pleasant coverture  
Of damas, satin, or else of velvet pure;  
I keep them sure fearing they should be  
lost,  
For in them is the cunning wherein I me  
boast.

But if it fortune that any learned man  
Within my house fall to disputation,  
I drawe the curtaynes to show my bookés  
then,  
That they of my cunning should make  
probation:  
I kepé not to fall in altercation;  
And while they commune, my books I  
turn and wind,  
For all's in them and nothing in my mind.

Barclay is by no means a servile translator. Nothing is said in his original of damask, satin, or velvet bindings: probably because German books were commonly bound in leather. His *Eclogues*, following Mantuan, were absurdly entitled by him *Eglogues*, under the impression that this meant the talk of goatherds, although, as Johnson remarks, it could only mean the talk of goats. Two of the five are imitated from Mantuan, the others are chiefly made up from passages in the *Miseriae Curialium* of Aeneas Sylvius. There is but little of rural nature in these professed bucolics: but there is some human nature in the contrasted characters of the townsman and the country shepherd, and the notices of Bishop Alcock and other contemporaries are not devoid of interest. But the stuff of the poet's mind is

prose, and the medium of its expression at best "a scrannel pipe of wretched straw."

While English bards of the old stamp were thus prosing rather than poetising, the poetical regeneration of English literature was approaching from a quarter from which it had already come once before. The impulse which Italy had communicated to Chaucer, now almost extinct, was about to be renewed. Although the fifteenth century had in Italy, as elsewhere, been a period almost barren as regarded direct poetical production, the taste for poetry had never died out. Dante and Petrarch retained their fame and their readers, and after the discovery of printing their works were among the first to issue from the press. In the last quarter of the century the capacity for original composition revived in the persons of Lorenzo de' Medici, Politian, Boiardo, Pulci, and Sannazaro, with a swarm of minor writers and many elegant Latin poets. England was long in following the example, but intercourse with Italy had been greatly increased by extended commerce and facilities for foreign travel, and it was impossible that refined and poetically sensitive minds in England should remain uninfluenced, or that, becoming sensible as they must of the inferiority of their own country, they should not endeavour to remedy this in the only way possible to

men devoid of creative genius, by imitation. The regeneration of English poetry under Henry VIII. is therefore not associated with any reformer or restorer of striking genius, but with two men more conspicuous for the work they accomplished than for the absolute merit of their productions, and who in the next age would have taken but a subordinate place as poets. As became the initiators of a reform to be achieved in the name of culture, both were among the most accomplished men of their age and country, scholars, soldiers, and statesmen. They were the elder SIR THOMAS WYATT and HENRY HOWARD, EARL OF SURREY. The less poetically gifted of the two enjoyed the advantage of coming first.

Sir Thomas Wyatt—(1503?-1542)—not to be confounded with his equally celebrated son who was beheaded under Queen Mary, was born at Allington Castle Kent, about 1503, and was the son of Sir Henry Wyatt, a privy councillor of Henry VII



From Alexander Barclay's "Ship of Fools," 1509

and Henry VIII., and high in favour with both. Thomas Wyatt travelled in Italy in 1526



**Sir Thomas Wyatt**

*From an engraving by Bartolozzi after Holbein*

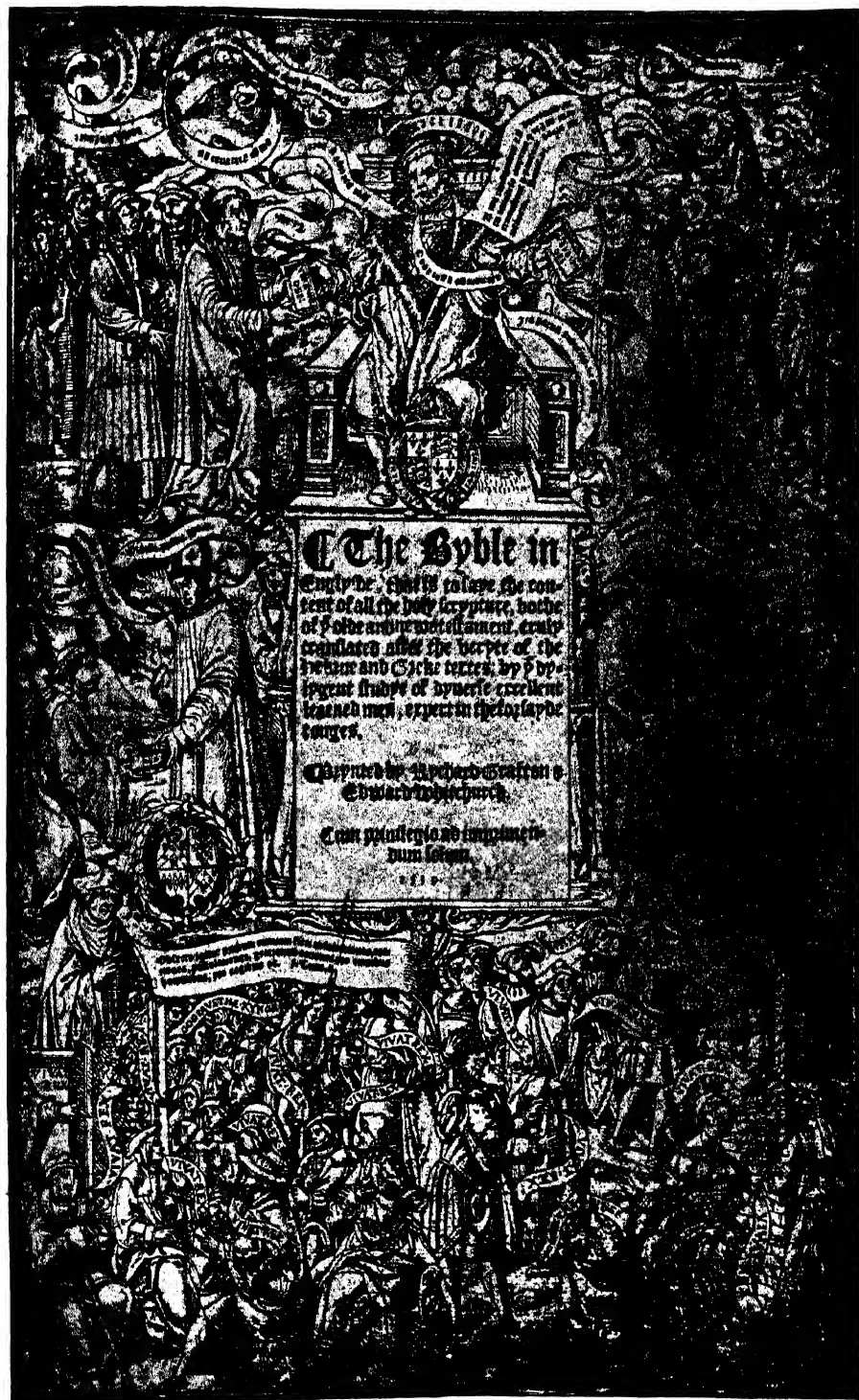
and 1527, the period when Renaissance culture attained its highest culmination in that country, but also when it received a deadly blow from the sack of Rome. Returning to England, he became, as commonly believed, unduly intimate with Anne Boleyn, and is said to have warned the King against espousing her. According to another report, however, he encouraged the divorce by the remark that it was strange that the King should not be able to put away his sin without leave of the Pope. Other pithy speeches, tersely expressing the essence of the particular question at issue, are attributed to him. Either on this account or for the service he had striven to render to Henry, or for his general merits and abilities, he was, with two brief intervals of apparent disgrace and confinement in the Tower, in continual favour, and was employed in important foreign missions. He died at Sherborne in October 1542, of a fever contracted by fatigue in hastening to

escort the Spanish Ambassador in his progress from Falmouth to London.

It is a capital distinction of Wyatt's to have been not merely the first English poet who consciously aspired to a high degree of refinement, but the first patrician who made an auspicious mark in English poetry. Chaucer and Gower could want nothing of the essential character of gentlemen, and were accepted and even familiar at court; but the station of one of them was that of an official, and the other probably that of a retired merchant. Other poets had for the most part been either priests or men of inferior standing. Wyatt first united blood and breeding, and filled the place which the aristocratic patrons of literature in the preceding century, the Tiptofts and Riverses, would have filled if they had been poets. As a man he was of the class for whom Castiglione and Bembo had written; as a poet it was his to show that love rules "the court" and "the camp" no less than "the grove."

The feature of his work which gives him his chief importance in the history of English poetical literature, is not the one which procures him his chief distinction as a poet. It is his introduction of the sonnet into English poetry. By this he not merely enriched his native country with a beautiful form, but, by prescribing a higher standard of art than had hitherto prevailed, he indirectly raised the standard of all poetical composition. His sonnets, nevertheless, whether translated or original, are the least satisfactory part of his writings. The English language was not yet sufficiently refined to allow





Title-page of the Great Bible, 1539

the perfect form of the Italian sonnet to be reproduced with exactness, nor did Wyatt hit upon the modification of it which was to prove so effective in the hands of Shakespeare. The Italian form is spoiled, and no passable substitute is evolved, nor does the intrinsic value of the thought make amends for the unskillfulness of the elaboration. The true poet is revealed, not in these ambitious attempts, but in the simple love-lyric. Even here, Wyatt often appears too conventionally lachrymose for genuine

**SONGES AND SONETTES,**

*written by the right honorable Lorde  
Henry Haward late Earle of Surrey,  
and other.*

charm, but he often utters such simple bird-like notes as England had hardly heard before, and seems to prefigure the strains of a Waller or a Herrick. The following verses, for example, part of a longer poem, ring with the music which nothing but true poetic feeling can create :—

As cruel waves full oft be found  
Against the rocks to roar and cry,  
So doth my heart full oft rebound  
Against my breast full bitterly.

And as the spider draws her line,  
With labour lost I frame my suit ;  
The fault is hers, the loss is mine ;  
Of ill-sown seed such is the fruit.

I fall and see mine own decay,  
As he that bears flame in his breast,  
Forgets for pain to cut away  
The thing that breedeth his unrest.

*Apud Ricardum Tottel  
Cum privilegio ad imprimendum solum.  
1557.*

Title-page of Tottel's  
"Miscellany"

Or this :—

Blame not my lute, for he must sound  
Of this or that as liketh me ;  
For lack of wit the lute is bound  
To give such tune as pleaseth me ;  
Though my songs be somewhat strange,  
And speak such words as touch thy change,  
Blame not my lute.

As already mentioned, tradition asserts Wyatt to have been the lover of Anne Boleyn, and supposes his amorous poetry to have been addressed to her. In one of his sonnets he certainly seems to say that the object of his adoration is out of his reach as belonging to the King, and compares her to the hind dismissed by Cæsar with an engraven collar attesting his ownership. But the thought is taken, almost translated, from Petrarch (Sonnet 160, Carducci's edition), and the piece can hardly be regarded as more than a *jeu d'esprit*. If Anne was not the object of his devotion we have no other clue. If the following adaptation of Horace's *Ode to Lyce*, greatly beautified in the process, was actually addressed to any person, this could not be Anne Boleyn :—

My lute, awake ! perform the last  
 Labour that thou and I shall waste,  
 And end that I have now begun ;  
 For when this song is sung and past,  
 My lute, be still, for I have done.

As to be heard where ear is none,  
 As lead to grave in marble stone,  
 My song may pierce her heart as soon :  
 Should we then sing, or sigh, or moan ?  
 No, no, my lute ! for I have done.

The rock doth **not** so cruelly  
 Repulse the waves continually,  
 As she my suit and affection ;  
 So that I am past remedy,  
 Whereby my lute and I have done.

Proud of the spoil that thou hast got  
 Of simple heart, thorough Love's shot,  
 By whom, unkind, thou hast them won,  
 Think not he hath his bow forgot,  
 Although my lute and I have done.

Vengeance shall fall on thy disdain,  
 Thou mak'st but game of earnest pain :  
 Trow not alone under the sun  
 Unquit to cause thy lover's pain.  
 Although my lute and I have done.

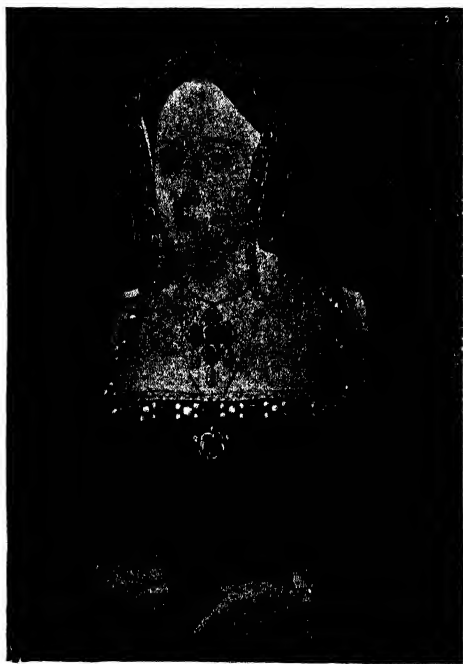
May chance thee lie withered and old  
 The winter nights that are so cold,  
 P'aining in vain unto the moon :  
 Thy wishes then dare not be told :  
 Care then who list, for I have done.

And then may chance thee to repent  
 The time that thou hast lost and spent,  
 To cause thy lovers' sigh and swoon :  
 Then shalt thou know beauty but lent,  
 And wish and want as I have done.

Now cease, my lute ! this is the last  
 Labour that thou and I shall waste,  
 And ended is that I begun ;  
 Now is this song both sung and past ;  
 My lute ! be still, for I have done.

Wyatt's enrichment of English poetry by the introduction of the sonnet was not his only service of this kind. He performed the more difficult feat of naturalising the *terza rima*, which previously only appears in one fragment by Chaucer, so far as this uncongenial form admits of naturalisation to English. For some reason, difficult to explain, the *terza rima*, which in Italian pursues an easy course like a rippling stream, with just sufficient interruption for variety, in English moves awkwardly and tardily, unless when, as in Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind*, it is converted into

a lyrical metre by division into separate stanzas. Even Byron's *Prophecy of Dante* wears the air of an exotic, while his octaves, although equally an imported form, appears native to our tongue. Wyatt, who has employed this form in a paraphrase of the *Penitential Psalm* and in satires, imitated from Alamanni, has done better than almost any successor. A passage like this, gliding along with easy fluency of the Italian, suggests that, notwithstanding all obstacles, the form of Dante's invention may one day be acclimatised in England :



Katharine of Arragon

After the portrait in the National Portrait Gallery

My mother's maids, when they did sew and spin,  
They sang sometimes a song of the field mouse ;  
That, for because her livelode was but thin,  
Would needs go seek her townish sister's house.  
She thought herself endured<sup>1</sup> to much pain ;  
The stormy blasts her cave so sore did souse,  
That when the furrows swimméd with the rain  
She must lie cold and wet, in sorry plight ;  
And, worse than that, bare meat there did remain  
To comfort her, when she her house had dight ;  
Sometimes a barley corn, sometimes a bean,  
For which she laboured hard both day and night  
In harvest time, whilst she might go and glean :  
And when her store was 'stroyéd with the flood,  
Then wellaway ! for she undone was clean.

The romantic history of Wyatt's coadjutor in the revival of English poetry is too well known to require much detail in this place. Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, was born about 1517, and fell a victim to the jealousy, or rather perhaps the exasperated temper, of Henry VIII. in 1547. He was esteemed the mirror of knighthood by his contemporaries, and seems to have in all respects deserved the character but for the occasional outbreaks of an overweening pride which sometimes involved him in undignified predicaments, and unhappily concurred with a political crisis to awake the suspicion of a mistrustful sovereign. If, as there is reason to believe, Surrey inclined to the principles of the Reformation, he must have played a great part in the subsequent history of England. The internal evidence to his character from his poems is most favourable, he appears everywhere as a man of the most refined intellect, and the noblest aspirations.

<sup>1</sup> Hardened.

In power of mind Surrey and Wyatt appear much upon a par, nor can either be said to have been a more genuine poet than the other as respects either the force or the quality of his inspiration. Surrey's superiority consists in the superiority of his art. He has more ease of expression than Wyatt, and handles rhythm and language with more grace. Though unable to reproduce the Italian sonnet in English he avoided Wyatt's clumsiness by devising a new sonnet form entirely suitable to the genius of our language, and destined, when Shakespeare took it up, to become the vehicle of some of our finest poetry. That Shakespeare himself had a worthy precursor in Surrey may appear from the following dignified composition, exalted by the closing couplet into real nobleness, on the death of his faithful retainer John Clere :—

Norfolké sprung thee, Lambeth holds thee  
dead,  
Clere of the County of de Ceremont  
hight :  
Within the womb of Ormonds race thou'rt  
bred,  
And saw'st thy cousin<sup>1</sup> crowned in thy  
sight.  
Shelton for love, Surrey for lord thou  
chase :  
(Ayme ! while life did last that league was  
tender)  
Tracing whose steps thou sawest Kelsal  
blaze,  
Landrecy burnt and battered Boulogne  
reuder,  
At Montreuil gates, hopeless of all cure,<sup>2</sup>  
Thine Earl, half dead, gave in thine hand  
his will ;

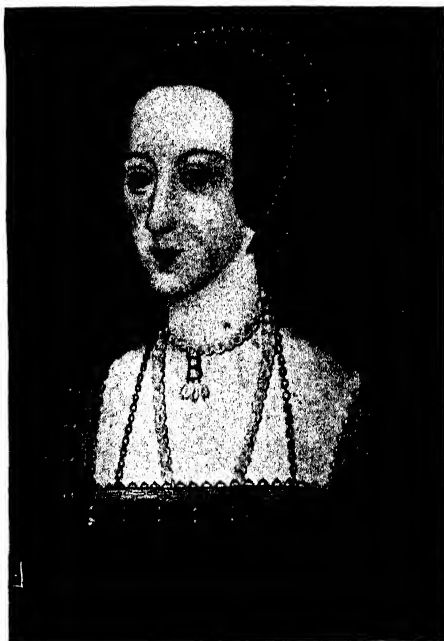
Which cause did thee this pining death procure,  
Ere summers four times seven thou could'st fulfil.  
Ah, Clere, if love had bootéd, care, or cost,  
Heaven had not won, nor earth so timely lost.

Surrey's muse also rises to much dignity in the poem written during his confinement at Windsor Castle, the place of his education, where, contrasting his former playground with his present prison, he enumerates the delights he had been wont to enjoy with something of the feeling of a former collegian for his college, or a schoolboy for his school :—

Where each sweet place returns a taste full sour,  
The large green courts where we were wont to rove  
With eyes cast up into the Maiden's tower,  
And easy sighs, such as folk draw in love :

<sup>1</sup> Anne Boleyn.

<sup>2</sup> Recovery.



Anne Boleyn

*After the portrait in the National Portrait Gallery*

The statety seats, the ladies bright of hue,  
 The dances short, long tales of great delight ;  
 With words and looks that tigers could but rue,  
 Where each of us did plead the other's right :

The palm play<sup>1</sup> where despoiled for the game,  
 With dazed eyes oft we by gleams of love,  
 Have missed the ball and got sight of our dame,  
 To bait her eyes which kept the leads above .



**Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey**

*After the portrait in the National Portrait Gallery*

The gravelled ground, with sleeves tied on  
 the helm,  
 On foaming horse with swords and friendly  
 hearts,  
 With chere<sup>2</sup> as though one should another  
 whelm,  
 Where we have fought, and chased oft with  
 darts :

With silver drops the meads yet spread for  
 ru h,  
 In active games of nimbleness and strength  
 Where we did strain, trained with swarms of  
 youth  
 Our tender limbs, that yet shot up in length :

The secret groves, which oft we made re-  
 sound  
 Of pleasant plot, and of our ladies' praise  
 Recording soft what grace each one had  
 found,  
 What hope of speed, what dread of long  
 delays :

The wild forest, the clothéd holts with green,  
 With reins availed,<sup>3</sup> and swift-breathéd  
 horse,  
 With cry of hounds, and merry blasts be-  
 tween,  
 Where we did chase the fearful hart of  
 force :

The void walls eke that harboured us each night,  
 Wherewith, alas ! revive within my breast  
 The sweet accord, such sleeps as yet delight ;  
 The pleasant dreams, the quiet bed of rest .

The secret thoughts imparted with such trust :  
 The wanton talk, the divers change of play ;  
 The friendship sworn, each promise kept so just,  
 Wherewith we past the winter nights away.

Surrey's supposed attachment to the Fair Geraldine (Fitzgerald), and his vision of her in Cornelius Agrippa's wondrous glass, as related by Thomas Nash, have supplied Scott with the subject of a fine poem ; and it is true that one of his own poems records his attachment to a Geraldine, but the supposed

<sup>1</sup> Tennis.

<sup>2</sup> Aspect.

<sup>3</sup> Drooped.

object of his affections was then a child, and there is no ground for deeming him other than a constant husband to the lady whom he had wedded in early youth. So Platonic is his love poetry, that one of its most impassioned examples is composed in the character of a forlorn woman :—

O happy dames, that may embrace  
 The fruit of your delight,  
 Help to bewail the woful case  
 And eke the heavy plight  
 Of me, that wonted to rejoice  
 The fortune of my pleasant choice :  
 Good ladies, help to fill my mourning voice.  
 In ship, freight with remembrance  
 Of thoughts and pleasures past,  
 He sails that hath in governance  
 My life whi'e it will last :  
 With scalding sighs, for lack of gale,  
 Furthering his hope, that is his sail,  
 Toward me, the sweet port of his avail.  
 Alas ! how oft in dreams I see  
 Those eyes that were my food ;  
 Which sometime so delighted me  
 That yet they do me good ;  
 Wherewith I wake with his re turn  
 Whose absnt flame did make me burn :  
 But when I find the lack, Lord ! how I mourn !  
 When other lovers in arms across  
 Rejoice their chief delight,  
 Drowned in tears, to mourn my loss  
 I stand the bitter night  
 In my window where I may see  
 Before the winds how the clouds flee :  
 Lo ! what a mariner love hath made me !  
 And in green waves when the salt flood  
 Doth rise by rage of wind,  
 A thousand fancies in that mood  
 Assail my restless mind.  
 Alas ! now drowneth my sweet foe,  
 That with the spoil of my heart did go,  
 And left me ; but alas ! why did he so ?  
 And when the seas wax calm again  
 To chase fro me annoy,  
 My doubtful hope doth cause me pain,  
 So dread cuts off my joy.  
 Thus is my wealth mingled with woe,  
 And of each thought a doubt doth grow ;  
 — Now he comes. Will he come ? Alas ! no, no.

English poetry has evidently entered a new region with Wyatt and Surrey. It is not so much the intrinsic merit of their productions which renders them memorable, as their having produced something which, unlike almost everything that preceded it, cannot even now be termed superannuated. The

beauty of Surrey's form remains, even when thought and diction appear antiquated. Like Wyatt, he excels in *terza rima*. We have not yet mentioned his greatest service to English poetry, the introduction of blank verse. Alliterative metre had indeed been free from the trammels of rhyme, but had trammels of its own even more restrictive, and was entirely



King James IV.

From "*Inscriptiones Historicae Regum Scotorum*," 1602

wrought without model. This is his version of the exordium of the second *Æneid* :—

incapable of that artful modulation by which, in the hands of a really tuneful poet, blank verse compensates for the absence of rhyme. No language in the world is so well adapted for blank verse as the English, and its introduction was to have results which no one at the time could have foreseen. Surrey, a sweet and graceful lyric poet, can have been actuated by nothing of the pedantry of Roger Ascham : his motive must have been simply the greater facility of blank verse in translation, to which his examples of it are confined ; and it was long before his example was followed, or extended to any other form of poetry but the dramatic. Surrey's versions comprised the second and fourth books of the *Æneid*. Their merit will appear the more remarkable when it is considered that he

They whisted all, with fixèd face attent,  
When Prince Aeneas from the royal seat  
Thus gan to speak : O Queen, it is thy will  
I should renew a woe cannot be told :  
How that the Greeks did spoil and overthrow  
The Phrygian wealth, and wailful realm of Troy.  
Those ruthful things that I myself beheld,  
And whereof no small part fell to my share,  
Which to express who could refrain from tears ?  
What Myrmidon ? or yet what Dolopes ?  
What stern Ulysses' waged soldier ?  
And lo ! moist night now from the welkin falls,  
And stars declining counsel us to rest.  
But since so great is thy delight to hear  
Of our mishaps, and Troye's last decay,  
Though to record the same my soul abhors,  
And plaint eschews, yet thus will I begin.

It is not in general easy to determine whether the ballads and fugitive



lyrics of the sixteenth century belong to the first or the second half of it, and it will be best to defer the consideration of them until the period of Elizabeth. One of them, however, *The King's Ballad*, must be cited here as most probably the production of Henry VIII. himself, who undoubtedly was a composer both of songs and music :—

Pastime with good company  
I love and shall until I die ;  
Grudge who list but none deny,  
So God be pleased thus live will I.

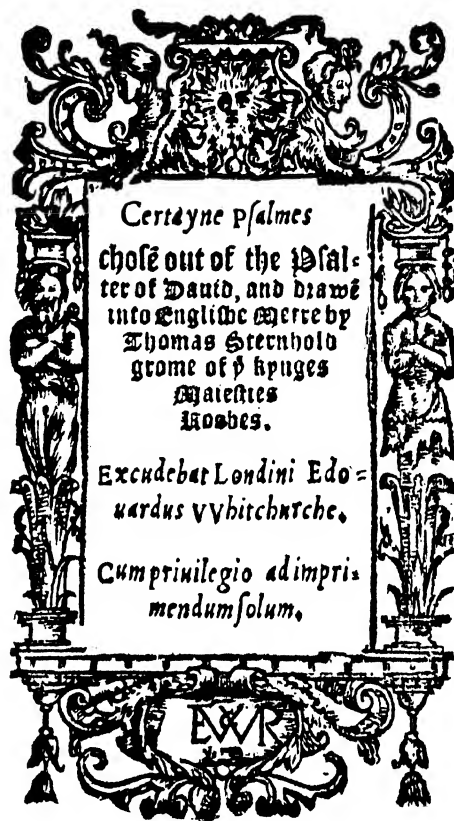
For my pastance,  
Hunt, song, and dance  
My heart is set ;  
All goodly sport  
For my comfort,  
Who shall me let ?

Youth must have some dalliance,  
Of good or ill some pastance ;  
Company methinks then best  
All thoughts and fancies to deject :

For idleness  
Is chief mistress  
Of vices all :  
Then who can say  
But mirth and play  
Is best of all ?

Company with honesty  
Is virtue vices to flee :  
Company is good and ill,  
But every man hath his free will.

The best ensue,  
The worst eschew,  
My mind shall be :  
Virtue to use,  
Vice to refuse,  
Shall I use me.



Title-page of Sternhold's "Certayne Psalmes," 1548

The metrical version of the Psalms by THOMAS STERNHOLD and JOHN HOPKINS must not be omitted, though none of the renderings possess any poetical merit except "The Old Hundredth." Forty versions are ascribed to Sternhold, sixty to Hopkins, and the remainder to various authors. The first edition, containing only nineteen psalms, probably appeared about 1547, the first complete edition was published in 1562. It was a work of necessity rather than of mercy, and it is surprising that its imperfections should have been so meekly tolerated by an age which possessed the noble prose translations in the Prayer-book and Bible.

The age of Henry the Eighth was not destitute of attempts in the drama, which may be classified as either survivals of the old miracle play, or rude precursors of the modern stage, along with which they will be most advantageously considered.

We must now resume the consideration of poetry in Scotland, a brilliant period preluding a complete eclipse. The most remarkable Scotch poet of the early Tudor age, and indeed of all early Scotch poets, is **William Dunbar**—(1460?–1520?) a man uniting refined fancy with coarse humour and vivid realism, a great master both of flowery and of vituperative rhetoric, an excellent painter both of Nature and of mankind, and consummate in versification. Of his life little is known, but that little is

London thou art of all cities I p  
 Sordaign of fumes / somelicht in fytte  
 of hygh Conon / chace & devyne  
 Of bird & beasne / a many goodly knyght  
 Of most delectable lady ladies bryght  
 Of fynes play in halow chawall  
 Of micheall fytte of subynnes & myght  
 London thou art the ffir of chaw all

Gladdly thou art lufy & joy noname  
 Fute that fute to me / chawall not well to  
 In all the fute / fute all at the fute  
 pynesse of chawall of pleasse & of joy  
 A fute / fute / fute / fute / fute / fute  
 fute manly fute / fute fute fute  
 fute fute fute / fute fute fute  
 London thou art the ffir of chaw all

Genne of all joy / fute of fute  
 fute fute fute / fute fute fute  
 fute fute fute / fute fute fute  
 fute fute fute / fute fute fute

Poem by Dunbar in praise of London

British Museum MS. Vell. A xvi

It might have come in shorter while  
 Frae Calicut and the new found isle  
 By parts of Transmeridiane.  
 Quhilk to consider is ane pain.

Dunbar probably wrote poetry before 1500, when he first received a pension. He seems to have accompanied the mission despatched to London in 1503 to negotiate for the hand of Margaret Tudor, when he must have composed his panegyric on London, gratifying to the pride of its citizens, but plainly written to order. The chief period of

interesting. In his youth he had the experience, almost unique among poets, of having travelled over Scotland and part of the Continent in the character of a begging Franciscan friar. He afterwards took regular orders, and became poet laureate to James IV., who pensioned him, but turned a deaf ear to his supplications for a benefice.

I know not how the Kirk is guided,  
 But benefices are not leill<sup>1</sup> divided;  
 Some men has seven, and I not  
 ane.

Quhilk to consider is ane pain.

And some, unworthy to brook one  
 stall,

Would climb to be a Cardinall;  
 One bishopric may not him gane<sup>2</sup>

Quhilk to consider is ane pain.

Unworthy I, among the lave,  
 One Kirk do crave, and none can  
 have,

Some with ane thrauf<sup>3</sup> plays pas-  
 sage plain.<sup>4</sup>

Quhilk to consider is ane pain.

It comes by King, it comes by  
 Queen,

But aye such space is us between,  
 That none can shoot it with a  
 flane.<sup>5</sup>

Quhilk to consider is ane pain.

<sup>1</sup> Fairly.

<sup>2</sup> Suffice.

<sup>3</sup> Heap.

<sup>4</sup> An old game played with dice.

<sup>5</sup> Arrow.

on faire fayrest off dy faire princes most pleasant and  
 preclare the lustrest one a lyve tgett byue welai of scotland to be  
 queene young tender plant of pulchritud descand of jaymyll blode fragre  
 fragrant floure of ffayre hede shak welai of scotland to be queene  
 lufy lufy lady clere most amychy knyght dostar dore borne of a pryncer  
 most se reue welai of scotland to be queene welai the rose  
 bothe rede & whyte welai the floure of oure delyte  
 oure secrete reioysyng ffrome the soy borne welai of scotland to be  
 queene welai of scotlande to be queene

Dunbar's Song of Welcome to Margaret Tudor as Queen of Scotland

his poetical activity seems to have been between this date and the fatal battle of Flodden in 1513, after which he is not mentioned. One poem bearing his name refers to a transaction in 1517, and he probably died soon afterwards. If the poem referred to be not genuine, he may have fallen at Flodden. The agitations of the Reformation period submerged him along with the other early Scotch poets; and although some of



Bishop Bale

From Holland's "Heroologia," 1620

his poems were printed in his lifetime, only one copy of the edition has come down to us. In 1832 his works were collected by David Laing, and he has since held his place with little controversy at the head of ancient Scotch poetry, a personification of the national character on the side of its vigour and its humour, the latter frequently involving gross indelicacy. In another point of view he is a continuer of James I. and Henryson, whose poetry is grounded upon Chaucer's. He speaks of Chaucer with enthusiasm:

O reverend Chaucer, rose of rhetors all,  
Surmounting every tongue terrestriall,  
Far as May's morn doth midnight:

and with less discrimination, extols the  
"sugared lips and tongues aureate," and  
"angel mouthes most mellifluate" of  
Lydgate and Gower.

The most Chaucerian of Dunbar's poems is *The Golden Targe*, an allegory of the type so favoured by Chaucer and his successors, composed in a peculiarly beautiful line-stanza, which modern poets might reproduce with advantage. The poem goes forth upon a May morning, brilliantly described:—

For mirth of May, with skippis and with hoppis,  
The birdis sang upon the tender croppis,  
With curious note, as Venus chapel clerks:  
The roses young, new spreading of their knoppis,<sup>1</sup>  
Were poudered bright with heavenly beryl droppis,  
Through beamés red, burning as ruby sparks,  
The skyés rang for shouting of the larks  
The purple heaven o'er scaled in silver sloppis,<sup>2</sup>  
O'er gilt the treis; branches, leaves and barks.

After a while he lies down and dreams, and sees in a vision Beauty landing from a shallop accompanied by a troop of ladies, mostly allegorical personages, who make him, vainly defended by Reason, their prisoner, and deliver him into the custody of Heavy Cheer. It has been suggested that the poem was designed as the groundwork of a court masque, and this may have been the case, though there is no reason why it might not have been a mere sport of

<sup>1</sup> Buds.

<sup>2</sup> Slopes.

phantasy. *The Thistle and the Rose*, however, is clearly a court poem, composed to celebrate the marriage of James IV. with Margaret Tudor in 1504. It is another vision, this time in rhyme royal. Nature summons all animals and plants around her to witness the coronation of the Thistle (Scotland) and the Rose (England) as King and Queen of the vegetable creation, with a side rebuke to the Lily (France). Like the *Targe*, it is thoroughly Chaucerian in spirit, and very charming. Warton is nevertheless justified in his remark that "for all his ornate fancy the natural character of Dunbar's genius is of the moral and didactic cast." This is evinced in the homely and



Edward VI.

From Holland's "Heroologia," 1620

familiar pieces, broadly humorous as these often are, which constitute the staple of his poetry, as well as in his more directly moralising poems. The

best known of these is the *Lament of the Makers*, i.e., the poets whom he has known and admired, but who, from Chaucer to his friend Kennedy, have become the prey of Death. There is something almost Villon-like in this dismal catalogue and its continual refrain, *Timor Mortis conturbat me*. Here the didactic purpose is reconciled with poetry by energy of expression, elsewhere the alliance is effected by profuse fancy or boisterous humour. The former is exemplified by the contest between divine and earthly love in the very beauti-

\*



Bishop Bale before Edward VI.

ful poem of *The Merle and the Nightingale* :—

In May as that Aurora did upspring  
With cristall e'en charming the cludd's sable,

I heard a merle with merry notis sing  
 A song of love, with voice right comfortable,  
 Against the orient beamés amiable  
 Upon a blissful branch of laurel green ;  
 This was her sentence sweet and delectable,  
 A lusty life in lov<sup>e</sup>s service bene,<sup>1</sup>

Under this branch ran down a river bright  
 Of balmy liquor, crystalline of hue,  
 Against the heavenly azure skyis light,  
 Where did, upon the other side, pursue  
 A nightingale, with sugared notis new,  
 Whose angel feathers as the peacock shone ;  
 This was her song, and of a sentence true,  
 All love is lost but upon God alone.

With notis glad and glorious harmony  
 This joyful merle so salued she the day,  
 While rung the wo des of her melody,  
 Saying, Awake, ye lovers, O, this May.  
 Lo, freshé Flora has flourished every spray,  
 As nature has her taught, the noble queen,  
 The field been clothed in a new array  
 A lusty life in lov<sup>e</sup>s service bene.

Ne'er sweeter noise was heard with living man  
 Than made this merry gentle nightingale,  
 Her sound went with the river as it ran,  
 Out through the fiesh and flourished lusty vale.  
 "O merle," quoth she, "O fool, stint of thy tale,  
 For in thy song good sentence is there none,  
 For both is tynt the time and the travail  
 Of every love but upon God alone."

The blackbird and nightingale continue their melodious controversy, always with the same refrain, until it suits the poet to put an end to it, which he can only do by awarding victory to the nightingale. It will have been observed, however, that his taste for earthly splendour is such that he has dressed his nightingale like a peacock. Other moral pieces are rendered poetical by extravagance of invention, as *The Devil's Inquest*, *Kynd Kittock* and *The Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins*, who exhibit themselves before the Devil with their proper attributes, but are quite outdone by the Highlanders whom Satan summons to wind up the festivity :—

These termagents, with tag and tatter,  
 Full loud in Erse began to clatter,  
 And roup<sup>2</sup> like raven and rook  
 The Devil so deaved was with their yell,  
 That in the deepest pit of hell  
 He smorit them with smoke.

Though not a man of marked original faculty like Dunbar, **Gavin Douglas**, Bishop of Dunkeld (1474?–1522 ?) is a true poet. His original poems, *The Palace of Honour*, and *King Heart*, allegories in the style of Ldgate, though not devoid of

<sup>1</sup> Is<sup>2</sup> Cry ; German, *rufen*.

interest, are still somewhat heavy. He has, nevertheless, gained high reputation as the translator of Virgil's *Aeneid*, not so much for the merit of the version as such, as for the boldness of the undertaking in his day, his priority over other translators, his happy choice of the heroic metre, and espec ally for the prologues of his own composition prefixed to the various books, in some of which he appears to great advantage as a descriptive poet. A younger son of the great Archibald, Earl Douglas, and provost of St. Giles' Cathedral, Edinburgh, his fortunes seemed greatly exalted by the marriage, within a year after the fatal defeat of Flodden in which James IV. had perished, of the widowed Queen Margaret to the Earl of Angus, Douglas's own nephew. But the Queen's endeavours to advance him involved him in incessant broils, and after obtaining the bishopric of Dunkeld, he was obliged to take refuge in England, where he died of the plague in 1522.

Douglas professes great indignation at Caxton's version of Virgil from a French romance :—

In prose he prent ane buik of Inglis gros,  
Clepad it Virgill in Eneados.  
Quhilk that he says of French he did translate,  
It hes nothing ado therewith, God wait,<sup>1</sup>  
Na mair like than the devill and Sanct Austyne:  
Have he na thank therfor, but lost his pyne.<sup>2</sup>

Douglas's own translation, though often prosaic, is sometimes truly poetical. His power, however, is chiefly evinced in the Prologues, especially when these are descriptive. Scotch poets seem particularly at home in describing

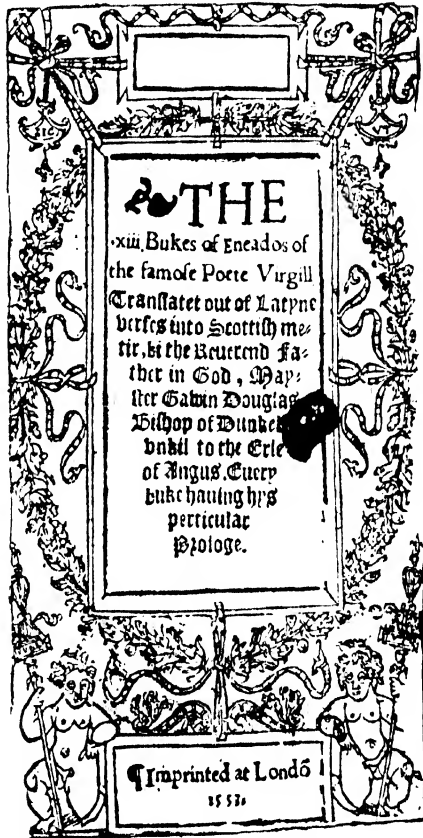
The grandeur and the bloom,  
And all the mighty ravishment of Spring :

—probably from the suddenness of her advent in Northern latitudes, and the magical rapidity of the transformation she effects. The following passage is from the prologue to the twelfth book. The wintry landscape is depicted with equal force in the prologue to the seventh.

Forth of his palace royal issued Phoebus,  
With golden crown and visage glorious.

<sup>1</sup> Wot.

<sup>2</sup> Pain.



Title-page of Gavin Douglas' translation of Virgil, 1553

Crisp hairs, bright as chrysolite or topas,  
 For whose hue might none behold his face  
 The fiery sparkes bursting from his e'en  
 To purge the air and gild the tender green  
 The aureate phanes<sup>1</sup> of his head sovraue  
 With glitter and glance o'er spread the oceane.  
 The largé fluids, lemand<sup>2</sup> all with licht,  
 But with one blenk of his supernal sight  
 For to behold it was a gloire to see  
 The stablised windés and the calme sea,  
 The soft season, the firmament serene,  
 The loune illuminate air, the firth amene,  
 The silver scaléd fishes on the grete<sup>3</sup>  
 Athwart clear streams sprinkilland<sup>4</sup> for the heat,  
 With finnés showing brown as cinnabar,  
 And chiselled talys, steering here and there

The description is pursued through a great number of lines, all embodying some detail both picturesque and true to nature. It concludes with an address to the sun :—

Welcome the lord of light and lamp of day !  
 Welcome fosterer of tender herbés green ;  
 Welcome quikkener of flourist flowers' shene ;  
 Welcome support of every root and vein ;  
 Welcome comfort of all kind fruit and gram ;  
 Welcome the birdis bield upon the brere ;  
 Welcome maister and ruler of the year ,  
 Welcome welfare of husbands at the plewis ;  
 Welcome, repairer of woods, trecs, and bewis ;  
 Welcome, depaunter of the bloomy meads ,  
 Welcome the life of everything that spreads ;  
 Welcome restorer of all kind bestial,  
 Welcome be thy bright beamés gladding all.

Some irregularities in metre and grammar may perhaps be accounted for by the work not having received the author's final corrections. He died, as we have seen, prematurely, and it was not printed until 1553.

SIR DAVID LYNDSEY (1490-1555) has been accurately described as the poet of the Scotch Reformation as Dunbar was of the Scotch Renaissance. The description suggests that he may have been too unequivocally the man of his own time to be much in the hands of posterity, and such is the fact. During his lifetime he wielded great influence, and occupied the rare and honourable position of a courtier who makes it his business to tell the truth to his master and expose with unsparing hand the vices of all orders in the State. He had sufficient literary power to gain the attention of his contemporaries, but not sufficient to preserve his writings after the immediate occasion for them had gone by. He is, nevertheless, too useful to the historian, both of politics and of opinion, to be overlooked, and his most important work, *Ane Pleasant Satyre of the Three Estaites* (1540) is a highly interesting specimen of the early strivings after dramatic composition, with which it will fall to be

<sup>1</sup> Vans, wings.<sup>2</sup> Gleaming<sup>3</sup> Gravel, grit<sup>4</sup> Darting.



considered. His work next in importance, *The Dreame* (1529), is a long and somewhat tiresome allegory, but is dedicated to James V., in whose bringing up Lyndsay had taken part, and who rewarded him with continual favour and the office of Lyon King-at-Arms, in a prologue reminding his royal charge of their connexion in lines of genuine feeling and simplicity. The following are the first two stanzas :—

When thou wast young, I bore thee in my  
arm

Full tenderly, til thou began to gang ;  
And in thy bed oft happit thee full warm,  
With lute in hand syne sweetly to thee  
san ;

Some time in dancing feirialie<sup>1</sup> I flang ;  
And sometime playing farsis on the flure ;  
And sometime on my office taking cure :

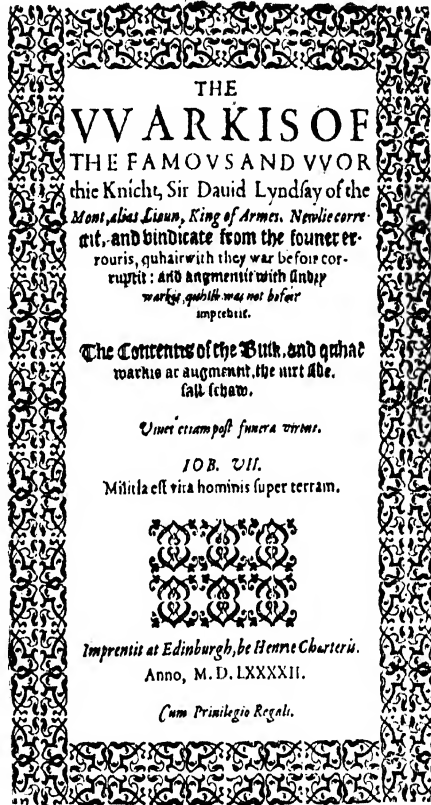
And some time like a fiend transfigure,  
And some time like the grisly ghost of  
Gye,

In divers forms at times disfigure,  
And some time dissagyist<sup>2</sup> full pleasantly.  
So since thy birth I have continually  
Been occupied, and aye to thy pleASURE ;  
And some time Sewer,<sup>3</sup> Coppar, and Car-  
voure.

The most important of Lyndsay's other works is his *Testament and Complaint of Our Sovereign Lord's Papingo* (parrot) a bold denunciation of the evils of the time. He was continually inditing short satires against what he considered abuses, and exhorting his well-intentioned but weak master to greater firmness in policy and consistency in life. Beginning as a denouncer of ecclesiastical abuses, he gradually became a thorough partisan of the Reformation ; but neither this nor the freedom of his censures seems to have exposed him to peril or odium. He was frequently employed in diplomatic missions, but had retired from public affairs some time before his death in 1555.

Scotch prose at this period is not important. Major and Hector Boece wrote their histories of Scotland in Latin. Bellenden translated Boece into Latin, though with additions and variations. *The Complaint of Scotland* (1549) is a good specimen of prose, but all the plan and much of the substance are taken from the *Quadrilogue Invecitif* of Alain Chartier in the fifteenth century.

The reigns of Edward VI. and Mary produced little that was new in literature, although several excellent works of older date were then published for



Title-page of Lindsay's "Works," 1592

<sup>1</sup> Nimbley.

<sup>2</sup> Disguised.

<sup>3</sup> Taster.

the first time. The indefatigable and pugnacious Bishop JOHN BALE (1495 ?-1562) may be placed under them : but the most valuable of his writings, his historical and antiquarian labours, were composed in Latin ; his polemics scarcely concern us ; and his curious dramas must be reserved for notice in another place. So must the plays of JOHN HEYWOOD the epigrammatist



John Heywood

Woodcut portrait from "*The Spider and the Fly*"

(1497?-1580?), mostly written under Henry VIII., but his epigrams, though until lately referred to the year 1562, may be placed under Mary, the recent discovery of an edition of the fourth century, dated 1560, showing that an undated edition of the first three centuries, previously known to exist, must be earlier still. Heywood occupied a somewhat ambiguous position at court between retainer and jester, and was a favourite with Mary, whose religious opinions he shared. After her death he went into exile and died abroad. His epigrams are not remarkable for brilliancy, but are interesting as the first English attempts at this style of composition.

The disastrous reign of Mary, nevertheless, is believed to have witnessed the composition of one of the most perfect of English classics, though this was not published till long after. It

was in 1557 that GEORGE CAVENDISH (1500?-1561 ?), formerly gentleman usher to Cardinal Wolsey, wrote his life of his master, a book worthy of the subject in dignity and of the author in charm. In faithfully depicting Wolsey's greatness of character, and not less the arrogance and despotism that impaired it, Cavendish has at the same time unintentionally depicted himself as the faithful follower with whom loyalty is an instinct, and whom neither his lord's misfortunes nor his own perception of his failings, can ever detach from him. Some tedious particulars got over, the narrative flows on like a clear and limpid stream, conducting the great Minister from the giddy height of power

and favour where he is found at first to the ultimate abyss of ruin which has always yawned for him, but has never seemed entirely inevitable, owing to the chronicler's fidelity in recording the gleams of hope which from time to time supported Wolsey's spirit, but which only deepen the tragedy to us to whom its issue is already known. Few narratives convey to the reader so strong an impression of actual presence at the scenes described, and of actual participation in the feelings which they must have called forth. The charm resides in the writer's transparency of soul, and the veracity with which he records the impressions he received from what passed before his eyes. His description of Henry VIII.'s entertainment to the French ambassador, for example, conveys the spirit of the festivity better than the most laboured description, and yet resembles the innocent prattle of a child :—



King James V.

*From "Inscriptiones Historice Regum Scotorum," 1602*

In the midst of this banquet there was tourneying at the barriers, even, in the chamber, with lusty gentlemen in gorgeous complete harness, on foot ; then there was the jike on horseback ; and after all this there was the most goodliest disguising or interlude, made in Latin and French, whose apparel was of such exceeding riches that it passeth my capacity to expound. This done, there came in such a number of fair ladies and gentlewomen that bare any bruit or fame of beauty in all this realm, in the most richest apparel, and devised in divers goodly fashions that all the cunningest tailors could devise to shape or cut, to set forth their beauty, gesture, and goodly proportion of their bodies : who seemed to all men more angelic than earthly, made of flesh and bone. Surely to me, simple soul, it seemed inestimable to be described, and so I think it was to others of a more higher judgment—with whom these gentlemen of France danced until another mask came in of noble gentlemen, who danced and masked with these fair ladies and gentlewomen, every man as his fantasy served him. This done, and the maskers departed, there came in another mask of ladies so gorgeously apparelled in costly garments that I dare not presume to take upon me to make thereof any declaration, lest



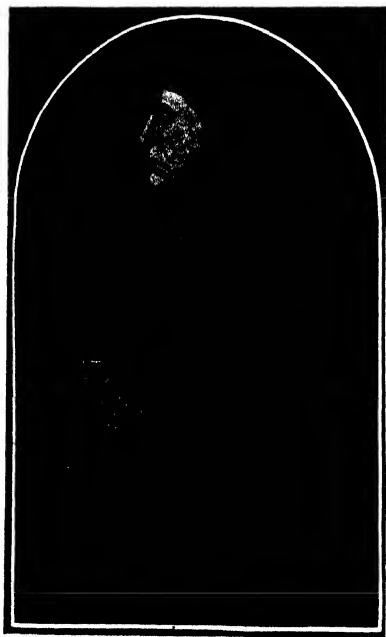
Queen Mary I.

*After the portrait by Joannes Corvus*

I should rather deface than beautify them, therefore I leave it untouched. These lady maskers took each of them a French gentleman to dance and mask with them. Ye shall

understand that these lady maskers spoke good French, which delighted much these gentlemen, to hear these ladies speak to them in their own tongue. Thus was their night occupied and consumed from five of the clock until two or three after midnight ; at which time it was

convenient to all estates to draw to their rest. And thus every man departed whitherto they had most relief. Then, as nothing, either health, wealth, or pleasure, can always endure, so ended this triumphant banquet, the which in the morning seemed to all the beholders but as a fantastical dream.



**Cardinal Wolsey**

*After the portrait in the National  
Portrait Gallery*

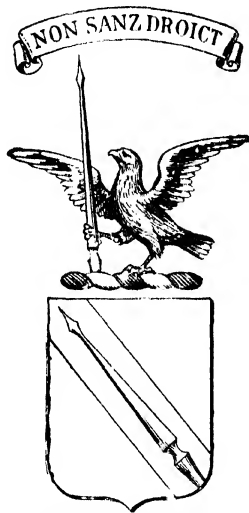
Cavendish's biography was not printed until 1641, and then in a very imperfect shape, but had been widely circulated in manuscript. It is largely used in Churchyard's *Tragedy of Cardinal Wolsey* (1587), and to a less extent in *Henry VIII.*, but not in the part of the play attributable to Shakespeare. His collaborator Fletcher was likely to be acquainted with the work, being a son of the Bishop of London, who had bequeathed him half his library. It was eventually restored to its original form by S. W. Singer, who had the good fortune to find and identify the autograph manuscript of the author.

Cavendish was a Roman Catholic, and devoted to the old order of things in State and Church. There was fitness in a book like his, consecrated to the memory of fallen greatness, ranking as the one literary monument of the reign of Mary, and being composed on the verge of a period of English history whose glory, both political and literary, was to cast every preceding era into the shade.

VOLUME II

FROM THE AGE OF HENRY VIII TO THE  
AGE OF MILTON

BY  
RICHARD GARNETT, C.B., LL.D.  
AND  
EDMUND GOSSE, M.A., LL.D.



SHAKESPEARE'S ARMS



## PREFACE TO THE SECOND VOLUME

THE first volume of this work covered more than seven centuries of literary history ; the second barely covers seventy years. The first was occupied to a considerable degree with the records of important literary movements enlisting numerous and nameless participators—such as the religious drama and ballad poetry—rather than with the individual authorship which almost engrosses the second. The first dealt with a time when British literature neither extended, nor was fitted to extend, beyond the British borders ; the second treats of a period when, though still confined within insular limits, it possessed the power and awaited the opportunity of exerting a deep influence on the world.

The historical treatment of epochs so contrasted cannot be exactly the same. The chief divergence will be found in the slighter notice accorded to inferior writers who would have been welcome, if they had come sooner, and the ample space devoted to those who have made the British literature of the age European, especially its two pre-eminent representatives, Bacon and Shakespeare.

This volume, to the end of the chapters on Shakespeare, is written by the author of vol. i., and thence to the conclusion by the author of vols. iii. and iv. The writers desire to record their obligations for literary assistance to Mr. A. W. Pollard and Mr. A. H. Bullen, and for aid in the department of illustration to Mrs. Christie-Miller, of Britwell Park ; to Mrs. Sydney Pawling ; to R. R. Holmes, Esq., King's Librarian, Windsor Castle ; and to S. Arthur Strong, Esq., Librarian to the Duke of Devonshire.

R. G.  
E. G.









Shakespeare Bust.

[Parish Church, Stratford-on-Avon.]

## CHAPTER I

### THE GREAT ELIZABETHAN PROSE WRITERS

WHEN, on the memorable November 17, 1558, the tidings came to Queen Elizabeth, sitting under a tree in Hatfield Park, of the death of her sister and predecessor, nothing seemed to indicate the glories, either in arms or arts, of a reign destined to unprecedented glory in both. The last two reigns had been unfortunate; one distracted by the struggles of ambitious ministers seeking to govern in the name of a boy-king; the other infamous for cruelty at home, and shameful for disaster abroad. Even in 1553 the sagacious Venetian envoy had noted the alarm of the English at the alliance of France and Scotland, and the national spirit and resources had since sunk lower still. Economic causes, in that age hard to comprehend and harder to remedy, aggravated the general depression. The great additions made and daily making to the world's stock of the precious metals had raised prices, rents, and by consequence taxes, to a degree previously unknown. Henry VIII. had allowed himself to be seduced into the expedient of debasing the currency, a practice continued by his successors, and the state of the finances was now nearly desperate. Since Henry's death, no one with any pretensions to statesmanship, Cranmer alone excepted, had had a share in the government, except in the most subordinate capacities: the ablest men were merely

*Political and literary outlook at the accession of Elizabeth*



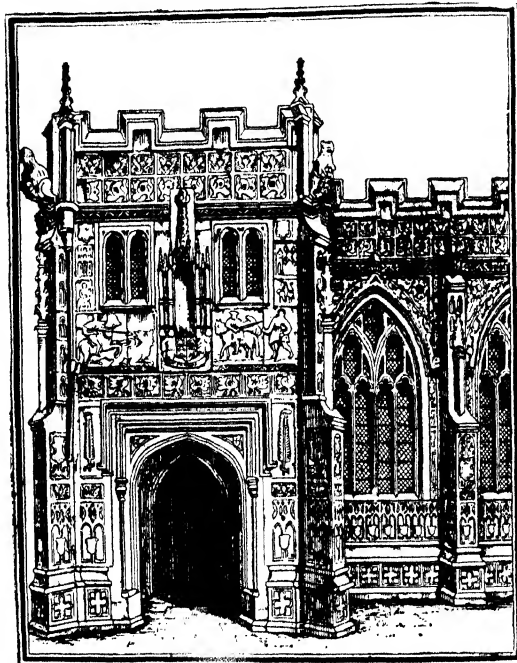
Queen Elizabeth

*From a scarce print by Crispin de Passe after a drawing by Isaac Oliver*

energetic like Northumberland, or merely astute like Gardiner. The blight on politics had extended to literature. More and Surrey and Wyatt seemed to have left no successors; at Elizabeth's accession her dominions contained hardly one author of recognised eminence. From every point of view the vessel of State seemed drifting on the rocks, but a breeze was to spring up unexpectedly, and bear her back to prosperous voyage on the open sea. Not less manifestly than in the day of the Armada, *afflavit Deus*.

*Influence of  
the Reforma-  
tion on  
Elizabethan  
literature*

The key to the marvellous change which was to ensue lies in the two watch-words we have already found so potent, Reformation and Renaissance. Nothing



Launceston Church

*From a drawing by F. Lyson*

is more undeniably evident than the happy fate of the countries which embraced the Reformation in comparison with those which rejected it, except the further observation, less agreeable to the reformers, that they were rather indebted for this felicity to their rulers than to their preachers. Wherever the principles of the Reformation were adopted by the sovereign, the Reformation triumphed; wherever, with the single exception of Scotland, more apparent than real, the monarch sided with the Church, the Reformation was crushed. By virtually adhering to the Reformation Henry VIII.

had saved the country from a civil war as terrible as that which, at Elizabeth's accession, was rendering the hereditary enemy, France, a cipher in European politics. At the same moment the Reformation gained the upper hand in Scotland, and the alliance of France and Scotland which had occasioned English statesmen so much anxiety fell away of itself. Thus were the two great sources of apprehension removed as though by enchantment, while at the same time England was, as it were, placed under bonds to adhere steadily to the Reformation as a condition of the friendship of Scotland, and the sympathies of French Huguenots, Dutch Protestants, and whoever else was helping to ward off the attacks which she might apprehend from continental powers. The principles of the Reformation do not here concern us, otherwise than in their connection with literature: but it is manifest that the mere assumption of a hostile attitude towards so much that had for centuries passed as

beyond discussion must have been a most potent intellectual stimulus, and provocative of mental activity in every direction.

Nor was the influence of the Renaissance less extensive or less salutary. It had not, as in Italy, produced any development of the arts; no Englishman of the period is remembered as architect, painter, or sculptor. When a great artist was wanted, a Torregiano had to be imported from Italy, or a Holbein from Germany. Even in the thirteenth century the magnificent statuary in Wells Cathedral had in all probability been executed by Italian sculptors: what native art could perform in Henry VIII.'s time may be

*Influence of  
the Renais-  
sance*

seen in the rude though vigorous exterior sculpture of Launceston Church. Just as little was the reaction towards classical paganism, so conspicuous in Italy, visible in a country united to the ancient world by no affinities of blood, and remote from the silent preaching of ruined temples and monuments of ancient worship. The influence of the Renaissance in England was mainly educational, it did not immediately create a school of literature, but prepared the way for a new school uniting the best elements of the Renaissance school with the romantic. It had thoroughly permeated the upper classes of society, and transformed the fighting aristocracy of the Middle Ages, with just enough culture to appreciate the songs of a minstrel, into a society of polite



Sir Nicholas Bacon

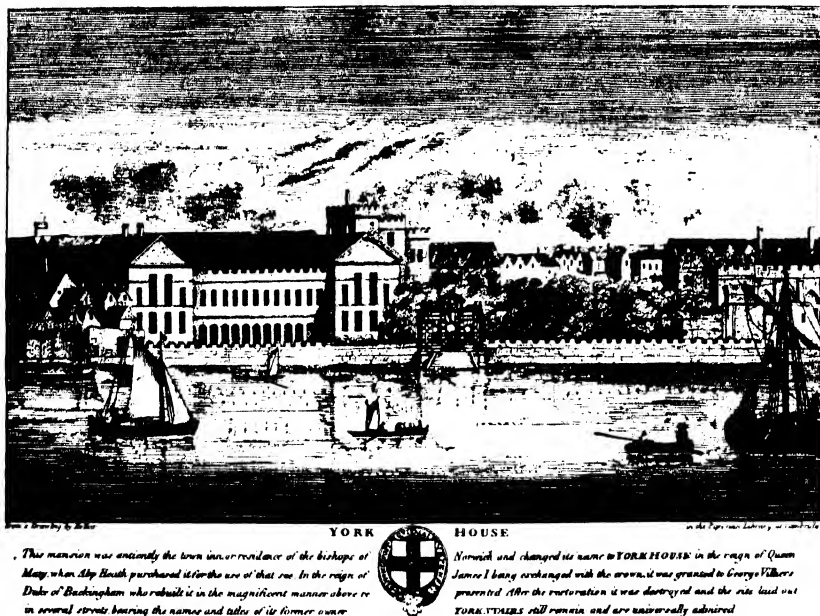
*After the portrait in the National Portrait Gallery*

and accomplished ladies and gentlemen. The high standard of cultivation attained in Elizabeth's time by the nobility and upper class of gentry is attested by a witness above suspicion, the simple and sober-minded William Harrison, author of the invaluable description of England published along with Holinshed's *Chronicles* in 1577. He is not backward to stigmatise the vices of the court; but of its merits he says:

This further is not to be omitted to the praise of both sorts and sexes of our courtiers here in England, that there are very few of them which have not their use and skill of sundry speeches, besides an excellent vein of writing before time not regarded. Troth it is a rare thing with us now to hear of a courtier which hath but his own language. And to say how many gentlemen and ladies there are that beside sound knowledge of the Greek and Latin tongue are thereto no less skilful in the Spanish, Italian, and French, or in some one of them, it resteth not in me, sith I am persuaded that as the noblemen and gentlemen do surmount in this behalf,

so these come very little or nothing at all behind them in their parts, which industry God continue, and accomplish that which otherwise is wanting.

The "excellent vein of writing before time not regarded" was when Harrison wrote on the point of overflowing from literary exercises and private correspondence into published literature. Style had begun to be sought as a distinction in the days of Henry VIII., and by Harrison's time the conception of literary merit apart from worth of matter was fully formed, and even carried to extravagant lengths by Lyly and his school. Spenser, Raleigh, and Hooker were then about twenty-four, Bacon sixteen. Shakespeare thirteen. Du Bartas, writing about the same time, could find no



one to extol in contemporary English literature except the Lord Keeper, Sir Nicholas Bacon, whom Nash indeed names among "the chief pillars of our English speech," but who does not appear to have composed anything except speeches and legal arguments.

*Birth of  
illustrious  
men near the  
accession of  
Elizabeth*

English prose had long been capable of expressing the highest thoughts, but the high thinkers had delayed to appear, and its resources, even in our own land, were comparatively unappreciated. Beyond the British Isles it was an entire dead letter. So, indeed, it was long to remain: but the reproach was about to be transferred from the barrenness of native genius to the stolidity, or rather perhaps the incuriousness, of foreign criticism. No foreigner, at the end of the sixteenth century, had the smallest idea that in the middle period of that century, within twelve years of each other (1552-1564), six men had been born in England, two of whom greatly surpassed, while the others fully rivalled, the genius, and in the long run the fame, of any

European contemporary, Cervantes alone excepted. It is remarkable that this great period is exactly bisected by the accession of the great Queen, who cannot, indeed, be reckoned among the especially munificent, or the especially discerning, patrons of literature, but without whom it may well be doubted whether Shakespeare would have written, or Bacon meditated, or Spenser sung. Circumstances, rather than deliberate intention, made her and her country the standard-bearers of the cause of freedom in Europe, and the most efficient instruments of the choice which Europe was called upon to make between the mediæval and the modern spirit. The perception of issues so momentous could in that age be but dim; yet its influence is shown by the vast development of men's conceptions, and the sudden outburst of original genius. Retracing the period, we ourselves are distinctly conscious of an atmosphere never breathed before, of a great elevation of ideals, public and private, and at the same time of tangible objects of ambition tending in the direction of national glory and aggrandisement. This alliance of the practical and the romantic is the special charm of the age, and not merely in England; but it was the peculiar happiness of England to be contending in the cause of the world as well as her own. Something not very dissimilar was seen at a later day when she fought single-handed against Napoleon, and this period also was signalised by an extraordinary outburst of original genius.



Lord Burghley

*After a portrait attributed to Mark Gheeraerts*

It is, nevertheless, a remarkable fact that this later outbreak was confined to poetry and its ally fiction. Apart from Scott and Miss Austen, not a single prose writer deserving to be accounted great appeared in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, while the blaze of poetical genius, leaving Shakespeare and Milton out of the question, surpassed everything that England had previously known. It was far otherwise in the reign of Elizabeth, whose highest literary glory indeed is to have given the world its greatest dramatic poet, but whose four great prose writers would alone have rendered it illustrious in the history of letters. Bacon and Raleigh's most important productions belong to the reign of James, but the men had not only grown but ripened as Elizabethans. Hooker and Sidney fall entirely within Queen Elizabeth's period. To treat these

*The four  
great prose  
writers*

four illustrious writers together involves some departure from strict chronological order, but seems preferable to mingling them with lesser men. Isolated from their contemporaries they proclaim more eloquently what is, after all, the dominant note of the time, the immense stride forward which England, so long hemmed and fettered, was making at last. Shake-

speare, a world in himself, obviously requires independent treatment; as also does the rival whom Ariosto, Tasso, and Camoens found in Edmund Spenser.

*Francis Bacon.*



**Francis Bacon**

*From his "Posthumous Works," 1657*

**Francis Bacon** was born on January 22, 1561, at York House, Charing Cross, the official residence of his father, Sir Nicholas Bacon, who ever since Elizabeth's accession had held the office of Lord Keeper of the Great Seal, which he retained until his death in 1579. Few of Elizabeth's counsellors held a higher place in her esteem, or had a larger share in affairs of State, especially in connection with ecclesiastical matters; nor could the future statesman and philosopher have been brought up under more favourable auspices. It is indeed unlikely that a man so occupied with judicial and political business as the Lord Keeper can have devoted much personal attention to the education of his son, but the want

must have been well supplied, and probably in great measure by the care of his mother, daughter of Sir Anthony Cooke, and sister-in-law of Burghley, who is described as a woman of strong character and convictions. Bacon must have been a youth of most precocious abilities, since we find him proceeding to Trinity College, Cambridge, at what now appears the preposterous age of twelve years and three months. Queen Elizabeth, indeed, is said to have been so much impressed by his early promise as to have playfully called him her young Lord Keeper, and the dissatisfaction which he afterwards represented himself at having felt with his Cambridge studies, which probably contributed to shorten his stay at the University, was a remarkable proof of mental independence. It was not, as might have been the case with many a youth of lively parts, founded upon dis-



taste for the dryness of logical and philosophical studies, but upon the perception which few of the wisest of that age had yet attained, that the scholastic philosophy of the time was mere barren logomachy, and imparted at most the skill to juggle with words, leaving the pupil uninformed as to the nature of things. Partly for this cause, and partly, it may be conjectured, from the anxiety of his father, now above sixty, to push him on in his destined profession while parental interest could yet avail, Bacon left the University in 1575, and commenced the study of the law at Gray's Inn at fourteen, the age at which, in the nineteenth century, it was deemed little short of a miracle that one of the most illustrious of his successors in the Chancellorship should have been admitted to matriculate at Oxford. The study of jurisprudence must have been in every way congenial to him, and he had doubtless made much progress when, in 1576, it was interrupted by a summons to study the great world in the capacity of attaché to the French embassy of Sir Amias Paulet. Paulet, a man of inflexible virtue, possessed few of the characteristic merits of the diplomatist, but the observation of the society and the politics of that brilliant but distracted court and epoch must have been invaluable to Bacon, and goes far to account for the entire absence from him of that pedantry and self-sufficiency from which the studious and precocious, especially when mainly self-taught, find it so hard to free themselves. With the possible exception of his parents, no one, it may be remarked, can be cited as having exercised any direct personal influence on the formation of Bacon's mind, nor does



**Sir Francis Walsingham**

*After a portrait by Zuccero*

he appear to have belonged to any clique or union of sympathetic persons. Even more than Milton's, "his soul was like a star and dwelt apart." In 1579 he was recalled to England by the death of his father, from whom the claims of his mother, brother, half-brothers and sisters, besides the great expense Sir Nicholas had incurred in building his mansion at Gorham-bury, prevented his inheriting much. He sought the protection of his uncle Burghley, and, having been called to the bar in 1582, was returned to Parliament for Melcombe Regis in 1584. In 1585 he addressed to the Queen a "letter of advice" on the state of public affairs, remarkable for its maturity of wisdom and the expediency of the conduct it recommends to be observed both towards malcontent Roman Catholics and loyal but dissatisfied Puritans. It reveals at once the magnificent intellectual power which constituted Bacon's strength and the insensibility to emotional sympathies which became the chief

source of his weakness. His advice as regards both Romanists and Puritans is entirely sound, but his conclusions are reached by regarding Romanism and Puritanism mainly as political forces. Upon his own plane he is omniscient, but there is a plane above his of which he has no perception. Respecting the vexed question of his character, we may say at once that we find no symptom of moral obliquity in him; but we cannot help being conscious of a certain deadness towards exalted moral sentiment. No action of his life is incapable of defence, or at least of palliation; but, whenever two courses of action are presented for his acceptance, he is almost sure to select the one which, whatever other reasons may be alleged in its favour, has least to recommend it upon the score of generosity.



**Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex**

*After the portrait in the National Portrait Gallery*

Although Bacon's moderate and far-seeing views were in advance of Elizabeth and her chief counsellors, they could not fail to recommend him as a man of mark. He began to be noticed, was made a bencher of his Inn, and became a leading member of the House of Commons. "His hearers," says Ben Jonson, "could not cough or look aside from him without loss;" and his readers may observe that his rhetorical skill is not inferior to his argumentative power. Within five years of the composition of the "Letter of Advice" he was employed to write pamphlets in the name of Walsingham. "It was Bacon's fate through life," writes Mr. Gardiner, "to give good advice only to be rejected, and yet to impress those who received it with a sufficiently good opinion of his intellectual capacity to gain employ-

ment in work which hundreds of other men could have done as well." The first important incident in Bacon's life after he had fairly assumed this character of the valued and not unheeded and yet commonly ineffectual counsellor of sovereigns and statesmen was his friendship with Essex, which began in 1591. On Essex's side this was an ardent attachment, indissoluble save by the infidelity, real or supposed, of the other party; on Bacon's it was the regard of a tutor for a promising pupil, liable therefore to extinction if the promise should be falsified. There is no reason to mistrust Bacon's own subsequent account of it. "I held at that time my lord to be the fittest instrument to do good to the State; and therefore I applied myself to him in a manner which I think happeneth rarely among men." This was probably as high an ideal of friendship as Bacon was capable of attaining; he could not entertain an entirely disinterested affection, but could love for a consideration, which need not be, and in this instance was not, of a sordid or self-interested

character, but might be the service of the State, and the triumph of his own ideas. That these were serious motives with him was soon (1594) shown by one of the most honourable actions of his life, his resistance to the demand of the Queen and his own uncle Burghley that the Commons should consent to join with the Lords in a conference respecting the grant of a subsidy to the Government. The subsidy itself was not in question, but Bacon objected to the Commons' sacrifice of privilege in consenting to discuss questions of supply with the other house, and, to the great advantage of the country, carried his point to the frustration of his hopes of the Attorney-Generalship for which he was then a candidate. The moral conscience may have been weak, or rather undeveloped in him; the intellectual conscience was strong. The history of his connection with Essex is entirely in harmony with this view. So long as eminent public service could be expected from Essex, their union was perfect. With all the generous ardour of his nature, Essex exerted himself to procure office for Bacon, and, when his efforts failed, made him liberal gifts. Bacon on his part, fulfilled the functions of a wise counsellor until Essex's indiscreet conduct in his Irish government and after his return from it showed beyond dispute that he was incapable of justifying Bacon's hopes of him, when the latter did not hesitate to appear against him as one of the Queen's counsel. The situation was repeated with intense

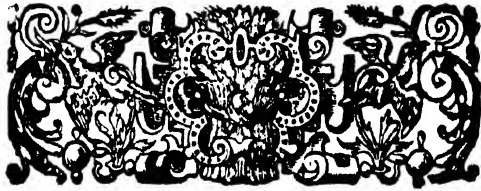
aggravation when, after Essex's frantic attempt at insurrection in 1601, Bacon, appearing against him as one of the prosecuting counsel, contributed to bring him to the block. Here, it is obvious, the intellectual conscience entirely acquitted him. Essex's offence was notorious; his punishment, if severe, was just; it is the duty of a queen's advocate to prosecute rebels. But it is equally plain that if Bacon had been endowed with fine sensibilities, such conduct towards his benefactor would have been impossible. One thing alone could really justify it, the apprehension of a failure of justice if he refused

# Essayes.

## Religious Meditations.

### Places of perswasion and disswasion.

Scene and allowed.



AT LONDON,  
Printed for Humfrey Hooper, and are  
to be sold at the blacke Beare  
in Chauncery Lane.

1597.

Title-page of the First Edition of Bacon's Essays

to appear, and of this there was no prospect whatever'. The verdict upon him here as almost everywhere must be, his heart was not bad but it was cold. The dignity and grandeur which continually seem to exalt his character no less than his writings have always, or almost always, an intellectual origin. From the moral point of view he may be said to hold an intermediate position between the two other great men of modern times especially distinguished for supremacy of intellect, and sufficiently well known to us to admit of comparison, as far below Goethe as above Napoleon. "The world," Professor Minto justly admonishes us, "has yet to see the intellect of a Bacon combined with the philanthropy

of a Howard". This is a general law, a special cause of Bacon's shortcomings may be read in his portrait, where the handsome and intellectual features are marred by an unmistakable expression of caution and timidity.

During his adherence to Essex, Bacon made his first appearance as an English author, by publishing his essays in 1597, along with short "Sacred Meditations," and a fragment on the "Colours (popular conceptions) of Good and Evil." The little volume contained only ten of the fifty-eight essays now appearing in his writings, a circumstance not devoid of interest as indicating the themes upon which he first felt an inclination to treat. They will be more fully noticed further on. at present it must suffice to remark, that they are by far the most generally known and popular of his works. Innumerable examples of their pithy wisdom have passed into general acceptance and become household words. Their philosophy is practical rather than speculative, but that Bacon's early manhood was largely devoted to profound study seems evinced by the remarkable fact

THE  
Two Bookes of  
FRANCIS BACON.

Of the proficience and aduancement  
of Learning, diuine and  
humane.

To the King.

AT LONDON,  
Printed for Henrie Tomes, and  
are to be sold at his Shop at Graies Inne  
Gate in Holborne. 1605.

Title-page of the First Edition of the  
"Advancement of Learning"

that for ten years after his call to the bar he never held a brief until he was obliged to appear as an advocate to remove an objection to his appointment as Attorney-General. From this time his appearances were frequent, and although he cannot have possessed the erudition of a Coke, ignorance of the law was never imputed to him.

The death of Elizabeth and accession of James in 1603 seemed to offer a great opportunity to Bacon. Elizabeth belonged to a previous generation, and her ideas of policy had long ago taken shape. James, a new man, was at the same time a very able man, and well-intentioned besides, but unhappily misled by an over-estimate of his wisdom, deficient in the force of character requisite to keep a great object steadily before him, and disfigured by a

<sup>1</sup> One of Bacon's most illustrious successors in the Attorney-Generalship, Sir Philip Yorke, afterwards Chancellor as Lord Hardwicke, was similarly called upon to prosecute his benefactor, Lord Macclesfield. He was excused, but he must have appeared or resigned if the charge had been political

Bacon's appearance as an author

Bacon and James I.

host of paltry and unkingly failings. Bacon seemed exactly the mentor whom such a sovereign required, and happy would it have been for the kingdom if James could have accorded him unlimited confidence. This could hardly be expected, and nothing less could have given Bacon the authority requisite for the accomplishment of his great designs, which may almost be summed up in the word union—union of spirit between Churchmen and Puritans, Parliamentary union between England and Scotland, conciliation of Roman Catholics at home and Irish malcontents across St. George's Channel, above all the creation of a thoroughly good understanding between the King and the House of Commons. In none of these endeavours did Bacon achieve any substantial success, while he was often usefully employed in salving wounds and staving off collisions by his growing authority with the Commons. These palliatives, however, were far from going to the real root of the matter, which Bacon sought to deal with in a succession of able memoirs on affairs of State addressed to the King, who we need not doubt read and admired, but rarely acted. Little could be done so long as Bacon was unable to temper James's excessive notions of his prerogative and his financial extravagance, errors to which it was difficult to allude without forfeiting his favour. On the other side, Bacon must have felt impatient and contemptuous of the Commons, whose narrowness and selfishness wrecked James's statesman-like scheme for union between England and Scotland. It is no wonder that acknowledging his "errors" in the dedication to his *Advancement of Learning* (1605) he should have especially deplored "this great one that led the rest: that, knowing myself by inward calling to be fitter to hold a book than play a part, I have led my life in civil causes, for which I was not very fit by nature, and more unfit by the preoccupation of my mind." Bacon cannot have really deemed himself less fit than Cecil for public business, and his self-reproach must be construed partly as a perception that in his efforts for the public good he was sacrificing yet higher objects; partly as disgust at the futility of this sacrifice, which so far had benefited neither the nation nor himself. That, however, he had not to reproach himself with an entire neglect of the higher wisdom is proved by the book to which these complaints are prefixed. *The Advancement of Learning* contains the germ of everything that distinguishes him from former and contemporary thinkers. In 1608, as is most probable, he commenced the composition of the *Novum Organum*. In 1609 he wrote a eulogy of Elizabeth and an able memoir on the plantation of Ireland. In 1612 the *Essays*, which had already had four publications, were increased to



**Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury**

*After the portrait in the National Portrait Gallery*

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thirty-eight in a new edition. A Latin treatise, more esteemed in his day than in ours, the *De Sapientia Veterum*, an ingenious but fanciful attempt to penetrate the profound meaning supposed to be latent in ancient myths, had been published in 1610.

*Bacon's rise  
and fall*

Bacon had married in 1606. Little is known of his wife excepting her respectable middle-class extraction, and that some dissatisfaction with her in his later years led him to revoke the will he had made in her favour. He had no family. In 1607 he became Solicitor-General. Further promotion seems to have been barred for the time by the hostility of Cecil, the real prime minister, whose experience, sagacity, industry, and above all financial ability, made him indis-

pensable, and who, though Bacon's cousin, had no intention of encouraging so formidable a rival. On Cecil's death in 1612, Bacon discerned his opportunity, and sought the King's leave to address to him a series of memorials on affairs of State. His starting-point was to be the expectation that a new parliament was shortly to be convoked, the dominant thought the effectual reconciliation of King and Parliament, and the establishment of an understanding for preventing future controversies. James permitted Bacon to write, and the result was a series of State-papers drawn up in 1613, of which Mr. Gardiner says: "To carry out this programme would have been to avert the evils of the next half-century;" regarding, that is, the religious toleration elsewhere advocated by Bacon as a portion of it. His enlightened views found but



**Sir Edward Coke**

*After the portrait by Cornelius Jansen*

partial acceptance with either King or Parliament, each being willing to accept the part which suited themselves, but disinclined to concede anything to the other side. The King, nevertheless, showed his appreciation of Bacon by making him Attorney-General in 1613; and the Commons, to whom his private communications to the King were unknown, marked their approbation of his public conduct by relaxing in his favour their prohibition of the Attorney-General's sitting in the House. Had the management of the Parliament rested with Bacon, it might not have been necessary to dissolve it shortly afterwards. Its sittings were suspended for seven years, and when it met again it was to hurl Bacon from office.

Bacon's political conduct during the interim had necessarily been that of a courtier rather than of a statesman. As Attorney-General it was his duty to conduct prosecutions ordered by the crown; in this he was zealous and efficient, and he began to see his way to the Chancellorship. Convinced that, in

his own words, "by indignities men rise to dignities," he was not averse to flatter the favourite, Somerset, whom he was afterwards to prosecute for the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury; upon Somerset's fall he turned to the new favourite Villiers. Yet, considering the important part which Villiers was called upon to play, Bacon can hardly be censured for having advised him, and must be commended for advising him well. His private relations both with Villiers and the King were less defensible, they reveal no moral obliquity, but a servility excusable in an ordinary courtier, humiliating in the greatest intellect of his age. He had now (January 1618) gained the object of his ambition, the Chancellorship, having been Lord Keeper since Ellesmere's death in the previous year, and in the following July was raised to the peerage as Baron Verulam. He approved himself rapid beyond precedent in the despatch of justice; and so little complaint was made of his decisions that they must be assumed to have been sound. Politically he was a cipher; the questions of the day related to foreign policy, and Bacon's statesmanlike and courageous advocacy of the cause of Protestantism all over Europe was unpalatable to a court bent upon political and matrimonial alliance with Spain. Bacon



Title-page of Bacon's "Novum Organum," 1620

found consolation in the establishment of his philosophical fame by the publication of his *Novum Organum*, described as the second part of the *Instauratio Magna*, in 1620. His position seemed perfectly secure when, within a few days of the attack which overthrew him, he gained a step in the peerage as Viscount St. Albans, but he was now to expiate the great error of his life in having built his worldly greatness not upon merit but upon court favour. James's entire policy was distasteful to the nation, and the Commons met in 1621 determined to visit it upon his favourite Villiers. Villiers and the King had been concerned in granting certain obnoxious monopolies in the guise of patents, which Bacon, in his official

character, had approved, probably almost as a matter of course. The attack upon patents and patentees was checked by the interposition of the King, and the Commons, willing to strike at Villiers through Bacon, whom they regarded as his creature, turned unexpectedly upon the latter with a totally unforeseen charge of judicial corruption, he having, it was affirmed, systematically accepted bribes from suitors. It seems almost incredible, but is certain, that the morality of that day permitted the judge to receive presents from litigants after he had decided in their favour. Bacon himself allowed this, but had laid it down that a judge must on no account accept gifts during the hearing of a case. It was, however, but too clearly proved that he had infringed his own rule; and although he was able to show that in most instances he had decided against the tempter, and could not therefore be said to have sold justice, the scandal was undeniable. Though conscious to himself that his integrity was really unstained, Bacon could not assume the haughty attitude of injured innocence; nor in any case was he the man to maintain such an attitude in the face of irritated public opinion. He adopted the wisest course in a worldly point of view by confessing his fault and throwing himself upon the mercy of the peers, his judges. A high-minded sovereign would have accepted his resignation and stopped further proceedings; but James and Villiers were without doubt heartily glad to find so convenient a scapegoat, and thought they did enough by practically remitting the very severe penalties pronounced by the judgment of the Peers, whose final decision is thus recorded.

The Lords having agreed upon the sentence to be given against the Lord Chancellor, did send a message to the House of Commons, That the Lords are ready to give judgment against the Lord Viscount St. Albans, Lord Chancellor, if they, with their Speaker, will come to demand it.

In the mean time, the Lords put on their robes; and answer being returned of this message and the Commons come; The Speaker came to the Bar, and, making three low obeisances, said

The Knights, Citizens, and Burgesses of the Commons House of Parliament have made complaint unto your Lordships of many exorbitant offences of bribery and corruption committed by the Lord Chancellor. We understand that your Lordships are ready to give judgment upon him for the same. Wherefore I, their Speaker, in their name, do humbly demand and pray judgment against him the Lord Chancellor, as the nature of his offence and demerits do require.

The Lord Chief Justice answered, Mr. Speaker, upon the complaint of the Commons against the Lord Viscount St. Albans, Lord Chancellor, the High Court hath thereby, and of his own confession, found him guilty of the crimes and corruptions complained of by the Commons, and of sundry other crimes and corruptions of like nature.

And therefore this High Court (having first summoned him to attend, and having received his excuse of not attending by reason of infirmity and sickness, which he protested was not feigned, or else he would most willingly have attended) doth nevertheless think fit to proceed to judgment, and therefore this High Court doth adjudge

1. That the Lord Viscount St. Albans, Lord Chancellor of England, shall undergo fine and ransom of forty thousand pounds.
  2. That he shall be imprisoned in the Tower during the King's pleasure.
  3. That he shall for ever be incapable of any office, place, or employment in the State or Commonwealth.
  4. That he shall never sit in Parliament, nor come within the verge of the Court.
- This is the judgment and resolution of this High Court.



The Prince his Highness was entreated by the House, that, accompanied with divers of the Lords of this House, he would be pleased to present this sentence

"Transportata Jul. 20. 1600.  
 To <sup>be</sup> in fit places. <sup>land</sup> more,  
 An Island where the fayre townes  
 stand with a stand in it and beate  
 with North.  
 An Island with Rock,  
 An Island with a Groe  
 An Island Mount with floweres  
 in afrents.  
 An Island pauid And we produce  
 Every of the Islands to name a  
 fayre image & figure is  
 Tryton or Nymphs.  
 An Island wth an arbor of  
 Misk rose for all wth  
 double violettes for four  
 in Autumn some golden  
 wth ake with drooping flowes  
 A fayre bridge to y<sup>e</sup> m<sup>dd</sup> an  
 great Island onely 7<sup>e</sup>  
 rest by boe.  
 To conclude the poyns of this bandy  
 of shewy but most as praye.  
 The making of the fayre mouth.  
 The appoyning more ground to by  
 laye this doth, specially the  
 best as by myng is preceptibly.

Facsimile page from a MS. Note-book of Bacon's, preserved in the British Museum

given against the late Lord Chancellor to His Majesty. His Highness was pleased to yield unto this request

The animosity, almost amounting to malignity, of Southampton throughout

the proceedings is very noticeable; he clearly remembered Bacon's share in the proceedings against himself and Essex. Judged by the standard of our day Bacon's conduct appears flagitious; according to that of his own it amounted at most to culpable disregard of appearances, for clearly the gift which the judge was permitted to accept after trial might have been the fulfilment of a corrupt bargain entered into previously. Bacon must here as elsewhere be acquitted of deliberate wrong doing, but here as elsewhere censured or compassionated for a deplorable lack of moral sensitiveness. It is characteristic of the duality of his nature that his intellectual conscience did not mislead him, and even gave him strength to rejoice at the purification of justice, though to his own shame and detriment. "I was," he said, "the justest judge that was in England these fifty years, but it was the justest censure that was in Parliament these two hundred years."

*Bacon in  
retirement.  
His death*

It is gratifying to be able to believe that Bacon's spirit was by no means crushed by his fall. He turned immediately to his *History of Henry VII.*, which was completed by October, published in the following year, and translated into Latin by the author. It proves that he might have been a great historian, and excites lively regret that the merest fragment was written of the life of Henry VIII. which was to have followed it. Bacon's judgments on the men and affairs of that eventful reign would have been invaluable. The rest of his life is too justly described by Mr Spedding as "a continual struggle to obtain by the help of others the means of pursuing the great purpose for which he lived, and generally a losing struggle." James applauded the resolution of "our cousin," "degere vitam quietam et tranquillam in studis et contemplatione rerum, atque hoc modo etiam posteritati inservire." but, under the sinister influence of Buckingham, as is probable, refrained from aiding him to carry it out. Like his successor, Lord Westbury, under somewhat similar circumstances, he offered to devote his leisure to codifying the law. The offer was not accepted, nor could he obtain the provostship of Eton for which he applied, or prevail upon Charles I. to recall him to the House of Lords. That he did not feel himself estranged from politics may be gathered from his *Considerations touching a War with Spain*, written when the failure of the Spanish match had established the soundness of his views on foreign policy. His main attention, nevertheless, was devoted to natural philosophy. *The Advancement of Learning* was republished in 1623 in a Latin form and with most extensive additions, as *De Augmentis Scientiarum*. For the rest of his life Bacon was active in the observations and experiments designed to confirm the truth of his great principle that knowledge comes from the study of Nature. Some of these were published by himself, others appeared after his death under the title of *Sylva Sylvarum*. He may be said to have laid down his life in the cause. A chill caught in a trivial experiment upon the antiseptic properties of snow brought him to the tomb on April 9, 1626. Even after his fall he had affected a magnificent style of living, and he died deeply in debt. But he had other possessions to bequeath than the goods of this world. A few months previously he had written in his will the oft-quoted words. "For my name and memory, I leave it to men's charitable speeches and to foreign nations and the next ages."

*Merits of  
Bacon's style*

As an author, Bacon is a representative of his age, but surpasses it where it is strongest, and avoids in great measure its characteristic defects. The prose of the period has a general air of loftiness and magnanimity, and

Bacon's communicates this impression more impressively than any other. Whatever may be known or surmised against his character, no reader while reading him can conceive of him as other than a magnanimous man. It was an age of metaphors and similes, and Bacon's are more numerous and more striking than those of any prose contemporary. In truth, his vivid perception of what might be but superficial analogies sometimes misguided his judgment, though it never prejudiced him his style. Perspicuity of style and methodical arrangement of matter are not conspicuous among the literary virtues of the period, but Bacon possessed both. As with Chaucer, his genius is attested by his perennial freshness. Representative as he is of his own time, no contemporary has so much the air of a modern.

It is remarkable that none of the four great writers whom we have selected as the four dominant figures of Elizabethan prose were, strictly speaking, men of letters. Hooker never affected any character but that of the divine; Raleigh's principal works were composed to record his own exploits, or solace his captivity; banishment from court produced Sidney's *Arcadia*, and amorous disappointment his *Astrophel and Stella*; while the motive of most of Bacon's works is not literary but scientific. That they should nevertheless have so greatly excelled professed authors is an indication that the man of thought

was not so widely severed from the man of action as in our day, and that Captain Sword and Captain Pen kept closer company then than now. Bacon comes nearer to the modern ideal than his contemporaries, his ordinary pursuits having a nearer affinity than theirs to the literary life. Yet even the most literary of his works, the *Essays*, does not



Bacon's  
"Essays"

Monument to Bacon in St. Michael's  
Church, St. Albans

read like the production of a professional author. Much of it might well pass for registered self-communings or memoranda for his own guidance in his pursuit of power, and wealth, and fame. The extraordinary point, which gives it a piquancy far surpassing that of any other work of precepts, is the alliance of this mere self-seeking with so ample an endowment of the wisdom from above. There is little to condemn absolutely, but much that savours rather of the counsel of Alithophel than of the schools of the prophets; much again that could hardly be refined upon by Ideal Virtue. This duality is one secret of the permanence and immense popularity of the book, equally acceptable to the children of this world and to the children of light. It is but natural that one of the least satisfactory of the Essays should be that on Love, which, compared with the discourse of other great men upon this immortal theme, seems *carbo pro thesauro*. Yet it is most characteristic; for Bacon, the man of intellect, sees above all things in love the perturbing force that overthrows wisdom and turns counsel into foolishness. Characteristic it is, therefore, that he should regard Love as an inconvenient, almost an inimical phenomenon: what is really disappointing is that he should appear able to conceive of him merely as an extravagant and irrational passion. With friendship he is more at home; friendship is really in his mind when he eulogises love. "A crowd is not company; and faces are but a gallery of pictures, and talk but a tinkling cymbal, where there is no love." Yet throughout his Essay on Friendship the note is pitched disappointingly low: we hear far more of the advantages and commodities of friendship than of its divinity. In both these essays Bacon creeps where Emerson soars: yet in the parts of the subject which come within the domain of the intellect his wisdom is supreme and authoritative. These are indeed golden words:

Friendship maketh a fair day in the affections from storms and tempests: but it maketh daylight in the understanding out of darkness and confusion of thoughts. Neither is this to be understood only of faithful counsel which a man receiveth from his friend; but before you come to that certain it is that whosoever hath his mind fraught with many thoughts, his wits and understanding do clarify and break up in the communicating and discoursing with another. He tosseth his thoughts more easily; he marshalleth them more orderly; he seeth how they look when they are turned into words; finally he waxeth wiser than himself, and that more by an hour's discourse than by a day's meditation. Heraclitus saith well in one of his enigmas: Dry light is ever the best. And certain it is that the light that a man receiveth by counsel from another is drier and purer than that which cometh from his own understanding and judgment, which is ever infused and drenched in his affections and customs. So as there is as much difference between the counsel that a friend giveth and that a man giveth himself as there is between the counsel of a friend and of a flatterer. How many things are there which a man cannot with any face or comeliness say or do himself! A man can scarce allege his own merits with modesty, much less extol them. A man cannot sometimes brook to supplicate or beg: and a number of the like. But all these things are graceful in a friend's mouth which are blushing in a man's own.

None of Bacon's Essays are more interesting than those in which he affords us glimpses of himself. The essay on masques, for example, although he

somewhat contemptuously dismisses the subject with, "Enough of these toys," acquires extraordinary interest when it is remembered how actively he was himself at various times concerned in the production of such entertainments at the Inns of Court. The Essay on Gardens is a mirror of his taste in gardening; the Essay on Plantations shows the attention he had given to questions of colonisation, in which he had a personal concern: his admirable advice to judges and advocates bespeaks the decorum of his own court. Ere he has yet been called to the chancellorship he here gives himself counsel, to have followed which would have averted his ruin:

Do not only bind thine own hands, or thy servants' hands from taking; but bind the hand of suitors also from offering. For integrity used doth the one; but integrity professed, and with a manifest detestation of bribery, doth the other. And avoid not only the fault, but the suspicion.

In great part the Essays are a very enchainment of generous sentiment: yet indications are not wanting that the writer's moral nature was not of the most exalted:

Certainly there be not two more fortunate properties than to have a little of the fool, and not too much of the honest. Therefore extreme lovers of their country or masters, were never fortunate, neither can they be. For when a man placeth his thoughts without himself, he goeth not his own way.

This is wisdom, but assuredly not the wisdom from above.

If affection lead a man to favour the wrong side in justice, let him rather use his countenance to compound the matter than to carry it. If affection lead a man to favour the less worthy in desert, let him do it without depraving or disabling the better deserver.

This is indeed the attitude of him who—

Would not play false,  
And yet would wrongly win.

Although Bacon's Essays in form correspond to his definition of an essay as "a dispersed meditation," in substance they are concentrated wisdom. It is, therefore, needful that they should be pregnant and pithy. It is consequently difficult to find elaborate passages available for quotation. They cannot, like Emerson's, be criticised as discontinuous: but the transitions frequently appear abrupt, from no want of art in the writer, but simply because an artful concatenation of thoughts would have required many words, and destroyed the aphoristic character of the piece. The perfect success of the author's method is evinced by the number of phrases which have found their way into literature as familiar quotations, selected by a process no less conclusive as to the infallibility of the general judgment in the long run than as to the merit of the sayings themselves. Whatever is most familiar is also best:

Revenge is a kind of wild justice.

The pencil of the Holy Ghost hath laboured more in describing the afflictions of Job than the felicities of Solomon.

It is the weaker sort of politicians that are the great dissemblers.

It is a sure sign of a worthy and generous spirit whom honour amends.  
 A little philosophy inclineth man's mind to atheism, but depth in philosophy  
 bringeth men's minds about to religion.  
 Money is like muck, not good except it be spread.  
 All rising to a great place is by a winding stair.  
 Suspicions among thoughts are like bats among birds, they ever fly to twilight.  
 It breeds great perfection if the practise be harder than the use.  
 God Almighty first planted a garden.  
 Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed  
 and digested.  
 A mind fixed and bent upon somewhat that is good doth avert the dolours of death.  
 There is no excellent beauty that hath not some strangeness in the proportion.  
 A painter may make a better face than ever was; but he must do it by a kind  
 of felicity (as a musician that maketh an excellent air in music) and not by rule.

These latter remarks prove Bacon's insight into æsthetics to have been no less than his insight into moral and natural philosophy. It is to be regretted that he wrought so little in this department. His reading in Latin, French, and Italian literature seems to have been very extensive: but it may be doubted whether the modern poets of any nation were much in his hands, and he probably read Greek only in Latin translations, a great misfortune, as it would disable him from gaining any real acquaintance with the Greek drama. Had this been otherwise the drama might not have been such a dead letter to him, as, but for his frequent concern with masques and pageants, would seem to have been the case. He derives striking similes from theatrical representations, and it seems impossible that he should not have highly appreciated Ben Jonson, the bent of whose genius must have been so much to his own taste, with whom he had much familiar intercourse, and who would certainly expect the high estimation in which he himself held Bacon to be repaid in kind. There are nevertheless few symptoms of Bacon having realised the importance of the drama either as an intellectual achievement or as a social force. In his essay on Travel he does, indeed, advise the young voyager to attend, with many similar gatherings, the representation of comedies, but only "such whereunto the better sort of persons do resort;" and he evidently has chiefly in view the opportunities thus afforded for making acquaintances, and learning the language of the country.

"*The Advancement of Learning*"

The history of *The Advancement of Learning* (1605) is remarkable as that of a great and epoch-making book swallowed up in one more extensive, much as Wordsworth's *Excursion* would have disappeared as an independent poem if the author's design had been fully carried out. The republication, however, of *The Advancement of Learning* in 1623, greatly enlarged, under the title, *De Augmentis Scientiæ*, is in Latin, and *The Advancement* still stands as the author's chief contribution to science in his native tongue. It consists of two parts, the nature and design of which are thus stated by the author himself:

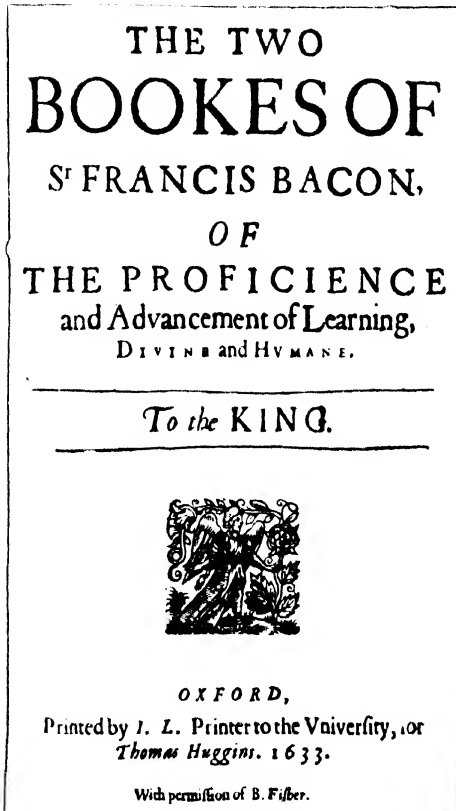
The former concerning the excellency of learning and knowledge, and the excellency of the merit and true glory in the augmentation and propagation thereof, the latter, what the particular acts and works are which have been embraced and

undertaken for the advancement of learning, and again what defects and under-values I find in such particular acts.

Bacon accordingly passes the condition of the various sciences in review, and his survey is most instructive. Some omissions, such as those of painting and music, were afterwards supplied in the *De Augmentis*, where he also expresses a less absolute satisfaction with mathematical science. The greatness of the book, however, consists in its being the first serious attempt to enthrone the empirical principle in natural philosophy. "Not," says Bacon's candid expositor, Dr. Fowler, "that the writers and teachers of his time had no recourse to the observation of facts at all, but that they only looked out for facts in support of preconceived theories, or constructed their theories on a hasty and unmethodical examination of a few facts collected at random." Experiment and observation could never be entirely neglected, but always had to give way when apparently at variance with the investigator's notions of the eternal fitness of things. "The handling of final causes," Bacon proclaimed, "hath intercepted the severe and diligent inquiry of all real and physical causes, to the great arrest and prejudice of further discovery." It may be safely affirmed that, next to the perfecting of scientific instruments, nothing has so greatly enlarged man's knowledge of the universe as the general adherence of natural philosophers to Bacon's method of investigation, compared with whose grandeur and fruitfulness the continual errors into which he fell in its application appear as nothing. Buddhism sums up all wisdom in "the Way," and natural science might imitate her.

The noble and flowing periods of *The Advancement* exhibit Bacon's style at its best. He is no longer cramped by the need for pregnant conciseness as in the *Essays*. The following is from his scheme, partly executed by himself, for the improvement of English history :

And if it shall seem that the greatness of this work may make it less exactly performed, there is an excellent period of a much smaller compass of time, as to the story of England ; that is to say, from the Uniting of the Roses to the Uniting



Title-page of "The Advancement of Learning," 1633

of the Kingdom, a portion of time wherein, to my understanding, there hath been the rarest varieties that in like number of successions of any hereditary monarchy hath been known. For it beginneth with the mixed adeption of a crown by arms and title; an entry by battle, an establishment by marriage, and therefore times answerable like water after a tempest, full of working and swelling, though without extremity of storm; but well passed through by the wisdom of the pilot, being one of the most sufficient kings of all the number. Then followed the reign of a king whose actions, however conducted, had much intermixture with the affairs of Europe, balancing and inclining them variably; in whose time also began that great alteration in the State ecclesiastical, an action which seldom cometh upon the stage: then the reign of a minor; then an offer of an usurpation, though it was but *febris ephemera*: then the reign of a queen matched with a foreigner: then of a queen that lived solitary and unmarried, and yet her government so masculine as it had greater impression and operation upon the states abroad than it any ways received from thence: and now last, this most happy and glorious event that this Island of Britain, divided from all the world, should be united in itself; and that oracle of rest given to Æneas, *Antiquam exquirite matrem*, should now be performed and fulfilled upon the nations of England and Scotland, being now reunited in the ancient mother name of Britain as a full period of all instability and peregrination; so that as it cometh to pass in massive bodies, that they have certain trepidations and waverings before they fix and settle; so it seemeth that by the providence of God this monarchy, before it was to settle in your Majesty and your generations (in which I hope it is now established for ever) it had then prelusive changes and varieties.

*The "Novum Organum"*

In the *Novum Organum*, which, being written in Latin, does not strictly fall within our province, Bacon returns in a measure to the aphoristic character of the Essays. "Maxims such as these," says Dr. Fowler, citing a few of the more remarkable, "live long in the memory, and insensibly influence the whole habit of thought. What Bacon says of Plato is pre-eminently true of himself; "he was a man of sublime genius, who took a view of everything as from a high rock." While, however, he had the genius to perceive the necessity of basing natural philosophy upon experiment, he attempted few experiments himself except such as were short and easy, and lacked the power of appreciating the researches of others. He disbelieved the Copernican theory; and failed to recognise the importance, not only of Gilbert's abstruse investigations in magnetism, but of Galileo's telescope, which must surely have captivated his imagination could he have known it otherwise than by report.

*"De Sapientia Veterum"*

The *De Sapientia Veterum* (1609), though originally written in Latin, ranks among English books through the contemporary translation of Sir Arthur Gorges. It brought Bacon more immediate reputation than any of his works, except the Essays, but has little significance for the present age, being at most an ingenious attempt to educe imaginary meanings from classical myths.

*"The New Atlantis"*

*The New Atlantis* may be regarded as an appendix to *The Advancement of Learning*, and at the same time as an attempt to present Bacon's ideas in a more popular form. It also aims at externalising them, and is thus the only example of Bacon's assuming the character of a creator, and depicting imaginary persons and things. The machinery, being the conception of the discovery of an unknown country by mariners driven out of their



course, invites comparison with *The Tempest*, and the parallel suffices to display the ludicrousness of the identification of Bacon with Shakespeare. Shakespeare waves his wand, and a new world starts up around him. Bacon transplants the world he knows to an imaginary locality. So little of the wild and wonderful is there in his work that one of the chief merits claimed for it is to have prefigured the institution of the Royal Society, and to have not improbably influenced its founders. Yet, if Bacon could not "pass the flaming bounds of Space and Time," he could work to excellent purpose within them, and his work is doubly interesting as a revelation of his own inner mind, and as a testimony of the strength of the enthusiasm which could impel so sedate a personage into fiction. It might not have been written but for the example of More's *Utopia*, to which, nevertheless, it presents an entire contrast. More's *Utopia* is ethical and political, Bacon's in its present fragmentary condition, for the moral sciences were never handled in it according to the author's original design, scientific. He had already established that the advancement of knowledge must come from the interrogation of Nature, and he now essays, by the example of an imaginary nation, to show how this may be conducted, more effectually, because systematically, than hitherto, under Government control. "Solomon's House, or the College of the Six Days' Works," is founded by the people of the New Atlantis "for the interpreting of nature, and the producing of great and marvellous works for the benefit of men." Whatever exception may be taken to details, the idea in itself is fine and fruitful, and eminently worthy of Bacon. The conduct of the fiction, also, merits the praise of ingenuity, in so far as the difficulties incident to the existence of the New Atlantis, and the scientific proficiency of the inhabitants are avoided. The fragment was written between 1614 and 1617, as appears from allusions in Bacon's own manuscripts. It was first printed after his death.



Francis Bacon

*After the portrait by Paul van Somer*

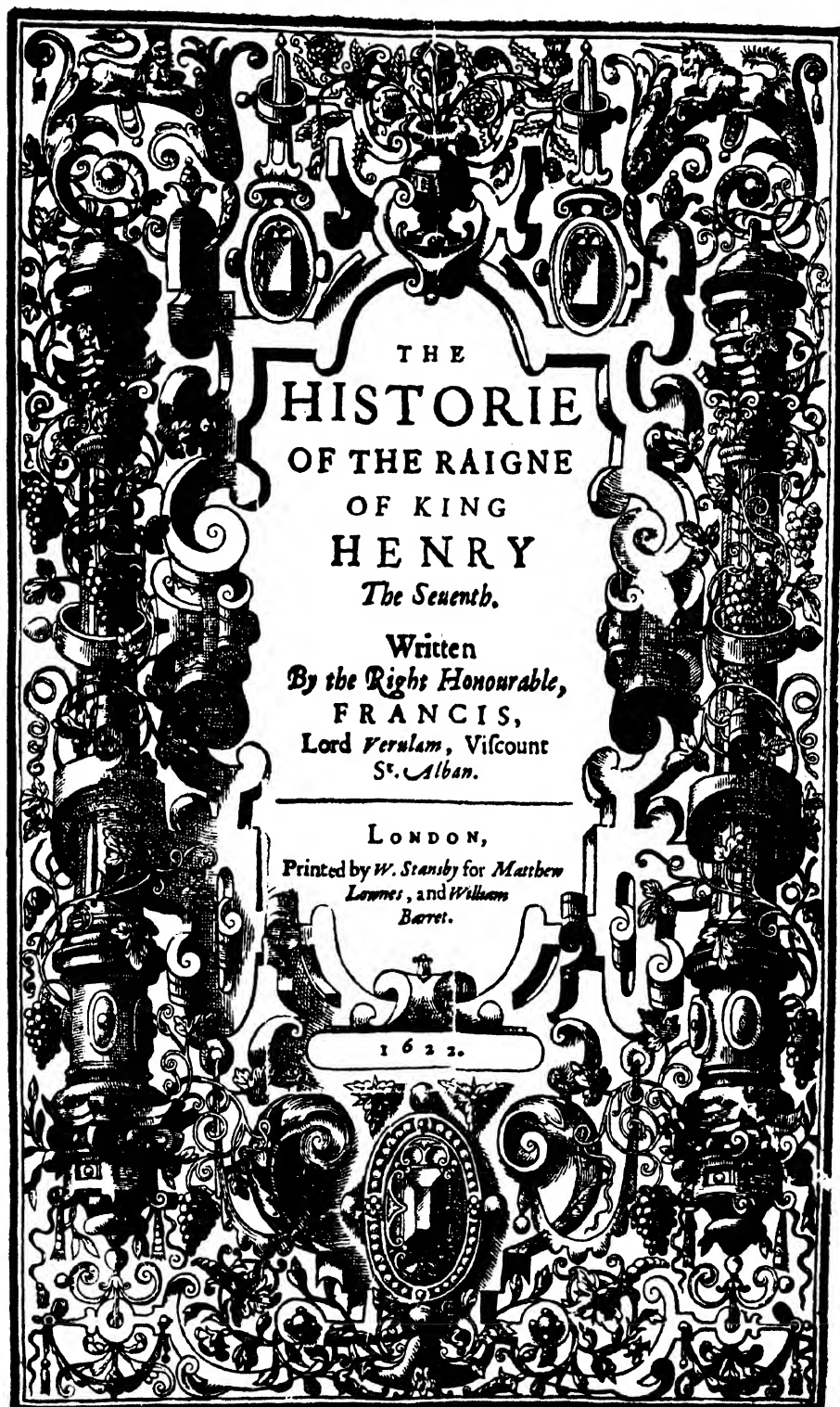
The following is a good specimen of the easy level narrative of *The New Atlantis*, as little like Shakespeare as can be conceived, but with a certain Defoe-like power of compelling credence :

It came to pass that the next day, about evening, we saw within a kenning before us, to the north, as it were thick clouds, which did put us in some hope of land ; knowing how that part of the South Sea was utterly unknown, and might have islands or continents that hitherto were not come to light. Wherefore we bent our course thither where we saw the appearance of land all that night ; and in the dawning of the next day we might plainly discern that it was a land, flat to our sight, and full of bosage, which made it show the more dark. And after an hour and a half's sailing we entered into a good haven, being the port of a fair city ; not great indeed but well built, and that gave a pleasant view from the sea : and we thinking every minute long till we were on land, came close to the shore, and offered to land. But straightway we saw divers of the people with bastons in their hands, as it were forbidding us to land ; yet without any cries or fierceness, but only as warning us off by signs that they made. Wherefore, being not a little discomfited, we were advising with ourselves what we should do. During which time there made forth to us a small boat, with about eight persons in it ; wherein one of them had in his hand a tipstaff of a yellow cane, tipped at both ends with blue, who came aboard on ship without any show of distrust at all. And when he saw one of our number present himself somewhat afore the rest, he drew forth a little scroll of parchment, somewhat yellower than our parchment, and shining like the leaves of writing-tables, but otherwise soft and flexible, and delivered it to our foremost man.

*The New Atlantis* was published in 1627, at the end of the *Sylva Sylvarum*, by Bacon's literary executor, Rawley. The recoverer of *Nova Solyma* points out its influence on that remarkable work, and it had several professed continuations. It seems to be ridiculed in Swift's *Voyage to Laputa*. For some reason not easily fathomed, satirists, from Aristophanes to Dickens, have usually been inimical to physical science. Rabelais is an exception.

The "History  
of Henry  
VII"

Bacon's political writings are numerous, and his historical compositions may be included among them. By much the most important of these is his *History of Henry VII.*, written, as we have seen, immediately after his disgrace in 1621. He had, no doubt, reason to know that the undertaking would be acceptable to James I., but there is no ground to suppose that he intended to idealise either James or himself in Henry : and, since we have seen that he had already indicated the history of England from the battle of Bosworth Field to the death of Elizabeth as an historical desideratum, it is most probable that he took advantage of his unwonted leisure to execute a favourite plan. The work does him the highest honour for its ease and breadth of execution, and perfect penetration of the motives of the leading actors. "He gives," says Bishop Nicholson, "as sprightly a view of the secrets of Henry's Council as if he had been president of it." It is entirely a political history, the life of a statesman by a statesman, and may in this respect be compared to the histories of Ranke, but is not, like these, based upon the evidence of State Papers. The author's complete knowledge of the period must have enabled him to dispense with documentary research, for, although minor errors have been discovered, such as attributing to Pope Alexander an action of his pre-



Title-page of Bacon's "History of the Reign of Henry VII.," 1622

decessor, no more recent writer has been able to vary Bacon's portrait of Henry to any appreciable extent. The tone is in general cool and unimpassioned, moral judgment remains in abeyance, and little use is made of the picturesque passages from the chroniclers, in which Shakespeare would have luxuriated; but the dryness which might have been the result of this sobriety is avoided by a frequent employment of quaint, brilliant, and striking metaphors and comparisons, some of which would in our day be thought below the dignity of history:

She began to cast within herself for what coast this blazing star should first appear, and at what time.

Upon the first grain of incense that was sacrificed upon the altar of peace at Bulloigne, Perkin was smoked away.

These fables grew so general as the authors were lost in the generality of speakers, they being like running weeds that have no certain root, or like footings up and down impossible to be traced.

For profit, it was to be made in two ways, upon his subjects for the war, and upon his enemies for the peace; like a good merchant that makes his gain both upon the commodities exported and imported back again.

The following is a good average specimen of Bacon's narrative:

The King went forwards on his journey, and made a joyful entry into Exeter, where he gave the citizens great commendations and thanks, and taking his sword he wore from his side, he gave it to the Mayor, and commanded it should for ever after be carried before him. There also he caused to be executed some of the ring-leaders of the Cornishmen, in sacrifice to the citizens, whom they had put in fear and trouble. At Exeter the King consulted with his counsel whether he should offer life to Perkin if he would quit the sanctuary and voluntarily submit himself. The counsel were divided in opinion. Some advised the King to take him out of sanctuary perforce, and put him to death, as in a case of necessity, which in itself dispenses with consecrated persons and things, wherein they doubted not also but the King should find the Pope tractable to ratify his deed, either by declaration or at least by indulgence. Others were of opinion, since all was now safe and no further hurt could be done, that it was not worth the exposing of the King to new scandal and envy. A third part fell upon the opinion that it was not possible for the King ever either to satisfy the world well touching the imposture or to learn out the bottom of the conspiracy, except by promise of life and pardon and other fair means he should get Perkin into his hands. But they did all in their preambles much bemoan the King's case, with a kind of indignation at his fortune, that a prince of his high wisdom and virtue should have been so long and so oft exercised and vexed with idols. But the King said that it was the vexation of God Almighty himself to be vexed with idols, and therefore that was not to trouble any of his friends: and that for himself he always despised them, but was grieved that they had put his people to such trouble and misery. But in conclusion he leaned to the third opinion; and so sent some to deal with Perkin, who seeing himself a prisoner and destitute of all hopes, having tried princes and peoples, great and small, and found all either false, faint, or unfortunate, did gladly accept of the condition. The King did also while he was at Exeter appoint the Lord Darcy and others commissions for the fining of all such as were of any value, and had any hand or partaking in the aid or comfort of Perkin or the Cornishmen, either in the field or in the flight. These commissions proceeded with such strictness and severity as did much obscure the King's mercy in the sparing of blood, with the bleeding of so much treasure. Perkin was brought unto the King's court, but not to the King's presence; though the King to satisfy his curiosity saw him sometimes out of a window or in passage. He was in show at liberty, but guarded with all the care and watch that was possible, and willed to follow the King to London. But from

his first appearance on the stage in his new person of a sycophant or juggler, instead of his former person of a Prince, all men may think how he was exposed to the derision not only of the courtiers but also of the common people, who flocked about him as he went along, that one might know afar off where the owl was by the flight of the birds : some mocking, some wondering, some cursing, some prying matter out of his countenance and gesture to talk of. So that the false honour and respects which he had so long enjoyed was plentifully repaid in scorn and contempt. As soon as he was comen to London, the King gave also the city the solace of this may-game. For he was conveyed leisurely on horseback, but not in any ignominious fashion, through Cheapside and Cornhill to the Tower, and from thence back again unto Westminster, with the churme<sup>1</sup> of a thousand taunts and reproaches.

Shakespeare has depicted a similar situation to Perkin's in his *Richard II.*, and the contrast between his profuseness and Bacon's sobriety, as marked as that between *The New Atlantis* and *The Tempest*, should alone suffice to decide the so-called Baconian controversy. He who can believe the writer of all others most resplendent in thoughts and fancies to have here shone with so dry a light may well believe the rustic merry-making in *The Winter's Tale* to be the creation of one who lived entirely in cities. The prevalence, nevertheless, of this remarkable delusion justifies a few words upon what might otherwise have been passed over--Bacon's technical claims to the character of poet. That Shelley was justified in claiming this character for him in the largest sense is indisputable ; his errors as a man of science are chiefly due to his sensitiveness to the picturesque aspects of the kingdom of nature. But, considered in the more restricted point of view as a practitioner of the poetical art, in which he must have excelled to have produced but one of the dramas of Shakespeare, his pretensions are but humble. The only poetical production that can with safety be attributed to him is a paraphrase of some of the Psalms, made in 1624, which enshrines with similar felicities this delectable couplet :

*Bacon's para-  
phrase of the  
Psalms*

There hast thou set the great Leviathan,  
That makes the seas to seeth like boiling pan.

The writer who can not only perpetrate but print such a piece of bathos can have but scant claim to the quality of poet : while he may yet be able to express himself metrically with dignity and eloquence when his theme is entirely congenial to him. The following stanzas are from the paraphrase of the ninetieth Psalm :

O God, thou art our home, to whom we fly,  
And so hast always been from age to age,  
Before the hills did intercept the eye,  
Or that the frame was up of earthly stage.  
O God, thou wert and art, and still shalt be :  
The line of time, it doth not measure thee.  
  
Both death and life obey thy holy lore,  
And visit in their turns as they are sent ;  
A thousand years with thee, they are no more  
Than yesterday, which as it is, is spent :

<sup>1</sup> Confused noise.

Or like a watch by night, that course doth keep,  
And goes and comes unwares to them that sleep.

Thou carriest man away as with a tide ;  
Then down swim all his thoughts that mounted high,  
Much like a mocking dream that will not bide,  
But flies before the sight of waking eye .  
Or as the grass that cannot term obtain  
To see the summer come about again.

Teach us O, Lord, to number well our days,  
Thereby our hearts to wisdom to apply ,  
For that which guides man best in all his ways,  
Is meditation of mortality.  
Thus bubble light, this vapour of our breath,  
Teach us to consecrate to hour of Death.

If this is not poetry of the highest order, it is something more than rhetoric in rhyme. But imagine the author of *Hamlet* and *The Tempest*, with the First Folio under his hand, spending his time over a generally mediocre paraphrase of the Psalms !

*Bacon as a  
Statesman*

Bacon's letters form an extensive collection. The most important are the elaborate considerations on affairs of state, drawn up in epistolary form for the enlightenment of rulers and public men : others refer merely to the events of the day. All are profoundly interesting, not so much on account of the particular themes as from the contact into which they bring us with Bacon himself. We see the man whose outlook is too wide for his time, and whose ideas have far outrun it, striving to obtain recognition by a policy of accommodation and suasion. In an age of liberty he might have led the Commons, and seated himself in power ; in an age of civil discord he might have been chosen arbitrator by both parties ; the condition of his own times left him no other part than that of a secret counsellor, commonly disregarded. The circumstances of his age also deprived him of much of his legitimate renown : as an English author writing for the world, and not for his own country alone, he was obliged to compose the most important of his works in Latin. Immense as was his service, immortal as was his meed, it was in him to have achieved and to have deserved much more. The identification of his person with the author of Shakespeare's plays, in itself an absurdity, acquires significance if regarded as an instinctive acknowledgment that, but for the faults of our ancestors, our debt to Bacon might have been even greater than it is, an awkward way of formulating the world's consciousness that, although Bacon laboured unremittingly throughout a life exceeding the average term of human existence, he is, nevertheless, an " inheritor of unfulfilled renown."

*Richard  
Hooker*

Before Francis Bacon had taken a leading place in the world's eye save as an advocate, the second great name in Elizabethan prose literature had accomplished his work and passed away. RICHARD HOOKER occupied by comparison a narrow sphere : he could not, like Bacon, bequeath his memory to foreign nations, while it was destined to be a precious possession

of his own. On the other hand, his work, regarded as a finished labour, is more complete and durable than Bacon's. Bacon communicated an immense impulse to human thought, destined to result in the greatest achievements, but his own actual achievements were inevitably full of imperfections. Hooker, taking a theme large indeed, but still enclosed by definite boundaries, so handled it that little remained to be added, and his work is the very last which any successor would dream of superseding. Though professedly a mere expositor of the principles of the Church of England, he has gained the authority of a legislator. His position in intellectual history is akin to that of the great Roman Jurists who, seeming to expound the law, made it : with the difference that while their abhorrence of ornament amounts to repulsiveness, Hooker is one of the greatest examples in our language of ample, stately, and musical expression. The man who erected such a monument for himself, and such a bulwark for his Church, was in his person so quiet and unpretentious that, but for the happy accident of an enthusiastic biographer, almost the only personal problem this "most learned, most humble, most holy man" would have bequeathed to the world might have been, Was he henpecked? In the succeeding age, however, Izaak Walton, a man deeply imbued with the genius of the Church of England, made it his business to retrieve the minor biographical records of what he regarded as her golden age : and Hooker, at the instance, as is said, of Archbishop Sheldon, received a large share of his attention. Biographer and theme could not be more perfectly in harmony : yet, as Walton's talent was in no sense creative, the charming portrait seems painted on very thin canvas.

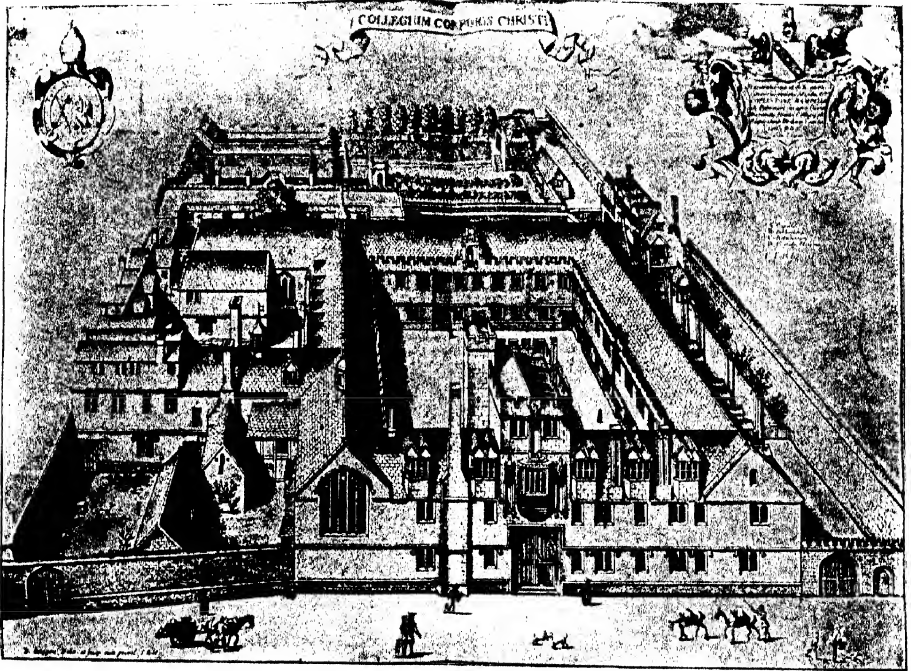


**Richard Hooker**  
*After the portrait in the National  
Portrait Gallery*

**Richard Hooker** was born at Heavitree, near Exeter, probably in March 1554. The family name had originally been Vowell, and he was nephew to the Exeter antiquary, known by both appellations, who revised Holinshed's *Chronicles* and presided over Exeter Grammar School. Hooker, whose parents seem to have been poor, was educated by his uncle, and showed such promise that the latter brought him under the notice of Jewel, Bishop of Salisbury, the champion of the Church of England in the Roman Catholic controversy, who bestowed a pension on his parents and obtained for the lad a clerkship at Corpus Christi College, Oxford. Richard's special abilities obtained for him a scholarship, irregularly bestowed as a mark of special distinction, he being beyond the statutable age. A Fellowship and a readership in Hebrew followed, and about 1581

*Life of  
Richard  
Hooker*

Hooker took orders. Going up to London to preach at St. Paul's Cross, and arriving in a condition of exhaustion from fatigue and wet, he was nursed by his landlady into recovery, but less fortunately into a marriage with her daughter, the only person, the good lady declared, who could possibly take care of him. Without adopting all Walton's statements to the disadvantage of this lady, she appears to have been but an unsympathetic mate for her studious husband, who was shortly afterwards discovered by two of his former pupils at his country parsonage of Drayton-Beauchamp in Buckinghamshire, alternately tending sheep and rocking the cradle. Being persons of influence, the young men procured



Corpus Christi College, Oxford

From Loggan's "*Oxonia Illustrata*," 1675

for him no less preferment than that of the mastership of the Temple Church, where he became involved in a vehement though not irate controversy with Travers, the afternoon lecturer. "The pulpit," says Fuller, "spoke Canterbury in the morning and Geneva in the afternoon." In 1591 Hooker, "weary of the noise and opposition of the place," received the living of Boscombe in Wiltshire, and in 1595 that of Bishopsbourne near Canterbury, to allow him leisure to compose his great work, *The Ecclesiastical Polity*, half of which was written in Wiltshire, and which was left incomplete at his death. Walton depicts him at Bishopsbourne as "an obscure harmless man, a man in poor clothes, his loins usually girt in a close gown or canonical coat; of a mean stature and stooping, and yet more lowly in the thoughts of his soul; his body worn out not with age but with study and holy mortifications; his face full of heat pimples he got by his inactivity and sedentary life." The characteristic most

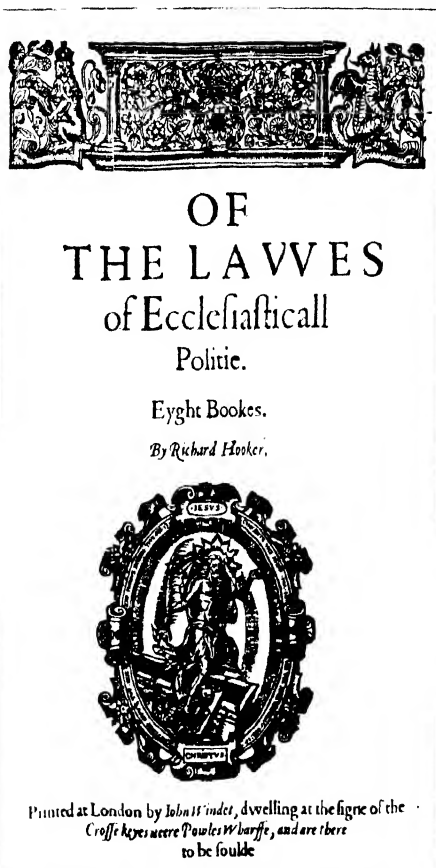


evident to ordinary observation seems to have been his extreme bashfulness, which injured his effectiveness as a preacher. "His voice was low, stature little, gesture none at all, standing stone still in the pulpit." His patience and gentleness in controversy, virtues unusual in that age, sufficiently attest his amiability; he did not suffer his studies to interfere with the less congenial duties of a country clergyman; and his respect for law is characteristically shown by his insistence with his parishioners to preserve their rights by annually beating their bounds. He died on November 2, 1601, after a month's illness.

"In this time of his sickness and not many days before his death, his house was robbed; of which he having notice, his question was, 'Are my books and written papers safe?' And being answered that they were, his reply was, 'Then it matters not, for no other loss can trouble me.'"

The first edition of *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* is not dated, but, having been licensed in January 1593, may probably have appeared in the course of that year. It contained the first four books only, with a promise of four more to follow. The fifth book, published in 1597, is larger than all its predecessors put together. The three remaining books did not appear until the middle of the century, and it seems certain that they were not finished compositions, but put together from the author's notes, and that the sixth book does not properly belong to the *Ecclesiastical Polity* at all. Whether he left the books

in a complete form, and they were destroyed by his wife's Puritan relations, is a matter of controversy. Such, according to Walton, was his widow's confession to Archbishop Whitgift, and the assertion was made positively in the preface to the edition of the first five books published in 1604. On the other hand, the illegible penmanship which, according to a sorrowing schoolmaster of the seventeenth century, prevented the publication of Hooker's manuscript sermons, may have had something to do with the matter. Perhaps, when Mrs. Hooker's kinsmen assured her that her husband's posthumous writings "were not fit to be read,"



Hooker's  
"Ecclesiasti-  
cal Polity"

Title-page of First Edition of Hooker's  
"Ecclesiastical Polity"

they only meant that they could not read them. Nor were the Puritans the only suspected parties. Hooker's moderation in advocating the claims of episcopacy, and the liberality of his sentiments respecting the royal power, were distasteful to High Church and high prerogative men in his own age and ever since, and as the text of the seventh and eighth books in which these subjects are discussed has been prepared, probably by Bishop Gauden, from a number of manuscript copies, what was mutilated in the interest of one party may have been interpolated in that of another.

*Character-  
istics of  
Hooker*



Archbishop Whitgift

*After an engraving by G. Vertue*

Hooker, like the Church he adorned and defended, is a remarkable instance of greatness depending upon the equilibrium of qualities apparently contradictory. As a general rule, mastery of a grand style of composition is found in union with vehemence, not to say intemperance, both of character and diction. Here, however, the finest prose writer of his age is so remote from excess of word or thought that the epithet which especially marks him out for posterity is not the eloquent but the judicious Hooker. As the champion of the Church of England he might have been expected to have been before all things a theologian; a theologian indeed he is, but he is even more of a philosopher. The first three books of his treatise are occupied with a profound investigation of the law of the universe, which the Puritans identified with the revelation of the Scriptures. Hooker maintained that the law was the law of nature, to which the

Scriptural was merely supplementary. The bearing upon current church controversies was obvious; for if Hooker was right, the discipline and ceremonies of the Church of England could not be rejected merely for want of direct Scriptural authority in their favour. The first three books, in which this argument is expounded, may be regarded as a great treatise on natural law. The third book contends that no system of Church government is enacted in Scripture, but that regard must be had to utility and the authority of antiquity. The remainder of the work, directed to the special vindication of the Church of England on the points on which it was especially criticised by Romanists and Puritans, is of less general interest, but was of more practical importance for his own generation. Ceremonies, Presbyterianism, Episcopacy came necessarily under review: and in the last book Hooker

treats of the subject which he has made most peculiarly his own, the Royal Supremacy. Generally speaking, his efforts in this part of his treatise are directed to show that the compromise between conflicting tendencies which wisdom and policy had effected at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign was not merely a temporary makeshift, but was in accordance with sound principle and right reason. In the course of time, Hooker's work has become more acceptable to the representatives of those against whom he wrote than to many of the representatives of those who in his own day applauded him : but amid all fluctuations of sentiment he will remain the chief doctor of the Church of England so long as she makes it her maxim to maintain a position equally remote from Rome and Geneva.

The style of Hooker is in signal contrast to whatever has been recorded respecting the personality of the man. The most remarkable characteristic of the author is represented to have been humility, the leading characteristic of his style is indubitably grandeur. He ranks among the very greatest masters of English prose. Less perspicuous than Bacon, he is even more dignified ; less overwhelming than Milton, he does not, like Milton, trench on the domain of poetry. Like Burke and Ruskin, he has the art of placing himself at a great height without the semblance of effort, and maintaining himself there as long as pleases him. His diction is certainly too Latinised, but he is treating of subjects usually discussed in Latin, and the atmosphere which surrounds him is one of scholarship. His sentences are frequently long and involved, but they never want logic, and seldom harmony. Like all great writers he rises with his theme, and appears to more advantage in declaring what Themis is than in debating what she enjoins :

Moses in describing the work of Creation attributeth speech unto God : " God said, let there be light ; let there be a firmament ; let the waters under the heaven be gathered together into one place ; let the earth bring forth ; let there be lights in the firmament of heaven." Was this the only intent of Moses, to signify the infinite greatness of God's power by the easiness of his accomplishing such effects, without travail, pain, or labour ? Surely it seemed that God had herein besides this a further purpose, namely, first, to teach that God did not work as a necessary but as a voluntary agent, intending beforehand and decreeing with himself that which did outwardly proceed from him ; secondly, to show that God did then institute a law natural to be observed by creatures, and therefore, according to the manner of laws, the institution thereof is described as being established by

*Style of the  
"Ecclesiastica  
Polity"*



**Pope Clement VIII. One of the greatest admirers of Hooker's style**

*From an engraving*

solemn injunction. His commanding those things to be which are, and to be in such sort as they are, to keep that tenor and course which they do, importeth the establishment of Nature's law. This world's first creation, and the preservation since of things created, what is it but only so far forth a manifestation by execution, what the eternal law of God is concerning things natural? And as it cometh to pass in a kingdom rightly ordered that after a law is once published it presently takes effect far and wide, all states framing themselves thereunto; even so let us think it fareth in the natural course of the world; since the time that God did first proclaim the edicts of his law upon it, heaven and earth have hearkened unto his voice, and their labour hath been to do his will. He made a law for the rain, he gave his decree unto the sea that the waters should not pass his commandment. Now if Nature should intermit her course, and leave altogether, though it were but



**Lady Mary Dudley, wife of Sir Henry Sidney  
and mother of Sir Philip Sidney**

for a while, the observation of her own laws; if those principal and mother elements of the world, whereof all things in this lower world are made, should lose the qualities which they now have in the frame of the heavenly arch erected over our heads should loosen and dissolve itself; if celestial spheres should forget their wonted motions, and by irregular volubility turn themselves any way as it might happen; if the prince of the lights of heaven, which now as a giant doth run his unwearied course, should, as it were through a languishing faintness, begin to stand and to rest himself; if the moon should wander from her beaten way; the times and seasons of the year blend themselves by disorder and confused mixture; the winds breathe out their last gasp, the clouds yield no rain, the earth be defeated of heavenly influence, the fruits of the earth pine away as children at the withered breasts of their mothers, no longer able to yield

them relief; what would become of man himself, whom all these things do now serve? See we not plainly that obedience of creatures unto the law of nature is the stay of the whole world?

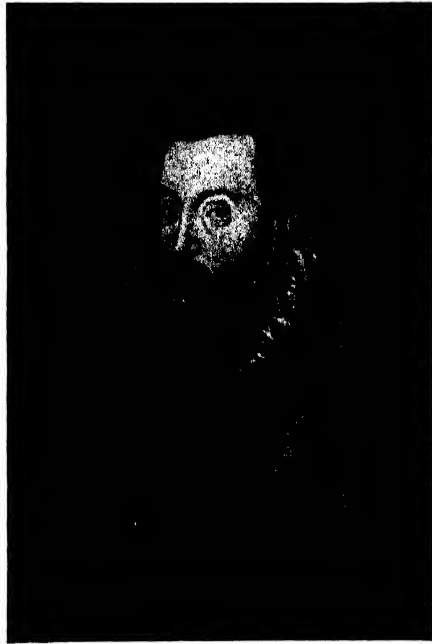
It will be observed how Hooker gathers fire and strength as he proceeds, until what began as an argument ends as a dithyramb, yet remaining noble prose. It is not usual to find such reverence for law in divines, and his argument admitted of being extended to lengths which he never contemplated. Any natural philosopher might have subscribed his final testimony to the supremacy of law, but few could have expressed it with equal majesty.

Of Law there can be no less acknowledged than that her seat is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world: all things in heaven and earth do her homage; the very least as feeling her care, and the greatest as not exempted from

her power ; both angels and men and creatures of what condition soever, though each in different sort and manner, yet all with uniform consent admiring her as the mother of their peace and joy.

The following exposition of the rational grounds of ceremonial usages in worship is an excellent example of Hooker's dexterous manner of urging a point peculiarly distasteful to his adversaries :

The end that is aimed at in setting down the outward form of all religious actions is the edification of the Church. Now men are edified when either their understanding is taught somewhat whereof in such actions it behoveth all men to consider, or when their hearts are moved with any affection suitable thereunto ; when their minds are in any sort stirred up unto that reverence, devotion, attention, and due regard which in these cases seemeth requisite. Because therefore unto their purpose not only speech, but sundry sensible means besides have always been thought necessary, and especially those means which being object to the eye, the liveliest and most apprehensive sense of all other, have in that respect seemed the fittest to make a deep and a strong impression : from hence have risen not only a number of prayers, readings, questionings, exhortings, but even of visible signs also ; which being used in the performance of holy actions, are undoubtedly most effectual to open such matter, as men whom they know and remember carefully, must needs be a great deal the better informed to what effect such duties serve. We must not think but that there is some ground of reason even in nature, whereby it cometh to pass that no nation under heaven either doth or ever did suffer public actions which are of weight, whether they be civil and temporal or else spiritual and sacred, to pass without some visible solemnity : the very strangeness whereof and difference from that which is common doth cause popular eyes to observe and mark the same. Words, both because they are common, and do not so strongly move the fancy of man, are for the most part but slightly heard ; and therefore with singular wisdom it hath been provided that the deeds of men which are made in the presence of witnesses should pass not only with words, but also with certain sensible actions, the memory of which is far more easy and durable than the memory of speech can be.



Sir Henry Sidney

*After the portrait in the National Portrait Gallery*

PHILIP SIDNEY, of whom we propose to treat third in the list of illustrious Elizabethan writers, does not, regarded merely as a man of letters, stand nearly on the level of Bacon and Hooker. The ages have left their renown unimpaired, while Sidney was quickly outstripped on his threefold walk as poet, romancer, and essayist. Yet he is as characteristic a figure as they, and one whose part, while he lived to perform it, seemed more brilliant and

*Philip Sidney*

attractive than theirs. He is the representative of that union of courtly and literary accomplishment which, while not peculiar to England in Elizabeth's time, is still a special note of her reign. It shines in Raleigh



Sir Henry Sidney's return to Dublin after a victory

*Derrick's "Image of Ireland," 1581*

and in many a lesser man, but in Sidney alone does it seem to attain its ideal perfection. To support such a character on the intellectual side, the person must give some proof of intellectual accomplishment, and we find



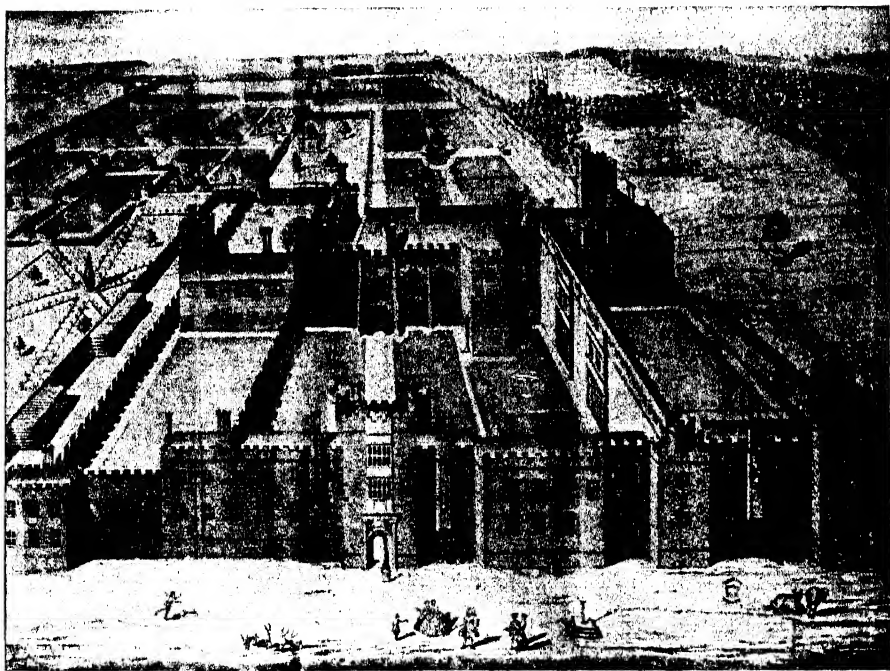
An Irish Chief's last fight

*Derrick's "Image of Ireland," 1581*

Sidney's writings far transcending the merely necessary standard, no mere literary exercises, but standing in a more intimate relation to the writer than can be asserted of most of the work of that time. They are the productions of a man of most distinct vocation, who might, or might not, have performed greater things, but did enough to make himself in letters, as in arms, the

most distinguished representative of a class that lives for us in the drama of the age ; but which, so ideally fascinating is it, we might, but for Sidney and men like him, suspect of having existed mainly in the imaginations of the poets. Sidney again, though somewhat younger than both Raleigh and Hooker, has the advantage of coming first in order of time among the great Elizabethan authors, of prefiguring both by example and precept many things yet in the future, and thus being endowed with something of the character of a hierophant.

The cavalier in Sidney was hereditary, the poet was the gift of the gods. His parentage was illustrious ; his father, Sir Henry Sidney, afterwards three times



**Penshurst**

*From an engraving by George Vertue*

Lord Deputy of Ireland, was one of the first statesmen and soldiers of his time ; his mother was the daughter of John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, who for a few days made himself all but king ; and his Christian name came from the King of Spain, his godfather. He was born at the family seat, Penshurst, on November 30, 1554. The accident of his father's holding the office of Lord President of the Welsh Marches caused him to be partly educated at Shrewsbury Grammar School, where he received letters of advice from his parent, most admirable in themselves, but which would seem fit for a much older person. Yet they do not seem to have been in advance of Sidney's precocity. Like Bacon, so dissimilar in most other respects, he was distinguished in boyhood by a sweet sedateness. " Though," writes his biographer Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke, his schoolfellow at Shrewsbury and friend throughout his life, " though I lived

with him and knew him from a child, I never knew him other than a man ; with such staidness of mind, lovely and familiar gravity, as carried grace and reverence above greater years ; his talk ever of knowledge, and his very play tending to enrich his mind." After spending three years at Oxford, Sidney, like Bacon, went to Paris and lived at the English Embassy, but not like Bacon in a diplomatic capacity. He was greatly caressed by the French court, Charles IX. actually making him a gentleman of his bedchamber, but all that he saw confirmed his attachment to Protestantism, which could not but be increased



**Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke**

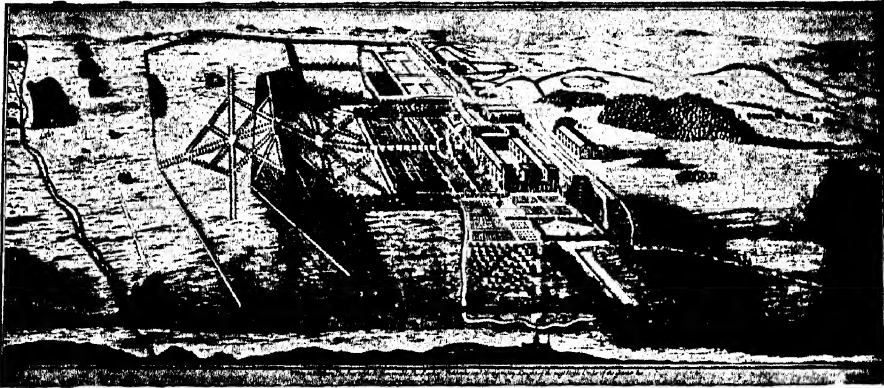
*After the portrait attributed to Mark Gheeraedts*

by the atrocious massacre of St. Bartholomew, of which he was himself an appalled witness. Hastening from the scene of carnage, he made his way to Germany, where he became acquainted with the eminent Protestant divine, Langueſ, whose correspondence with him is full of interest. He spent a long time in Italy, chiefly at Venice ; visited Austria, Hungary, and Poland ; and, notwithstanding his youth, is said to have received and declined an offer of the elective crown of the latter country. Much of his time was spent in study, much in amateur diplomacy or writing letters on Continental affairs to Burghley or his uncle Leicester. He returned to England in June 1575. For some years, except for service with his father in Ireland and a mission to Germany in which he endeavoured to bring about a league among Protestant princes, Sidney

remained at court, one of its chief ornaments, and the patron of men of every kind of desert, among whom Spenser is especially to be named. At the beginning of 1580 his loyal and patriotic opposition to Elizabeth's preposterous idea (if her encouragement of it was anything more than a pretence) of marrying the Duke of Anjou, caused him to be banished from court for a time. He retired to Wilton, and wrote the *Arcadia* for, perhaps in some measure with, his sister, the subject of the famous epitaph disputed between Ben Jonson and William Browne. Hence its title, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*. It was first published in 1590. The poetry in this famous romance is made to order, and inserted in compliance with prescription, but the practice



it conferred probably helped Sidney when, the next year, true poetry was drawn from him by the marriage of Lady Penelope Devereux, to whom he had regarded himself as in some sense betrothed, to Lord Rich. Sidney's feeling does not seem to have been previously very ardent; one cannot help suspecting that he could have dropped the lady without much agitation, but to be dropped by her was quite another matter. Piqued into passion, he forgot for a time the strictness of principle which had previously guided him, and composed the sonnets of *Astrophel to Stella* (first published in 1591), the best of which are truly impassioned, and may be compared with a remarkable sonnet-cycle of our own time, *The Love Sonnets of Proteus*. Lady Rich's subsequent history says little for her morality, but she had no mind to compromise herself, and in 1583 Sidney contracted a happy marriage with the daughter of Secretary Walsingham. In the same year, though there is no good evidence of the date, he may have written his *Defence* or *Apology of Poetry*



View of Wilton House in Wiltshire, where Sidney wrote the "*Arcadia*"

(published 1598), composed in the spirit of a knight errant who seeks to liberate a captive princess. As Sidney admits, poetry had not yet attained that degree of splendour in England which would have rendered defence unnecessary. In the following year he became intimate with Giordano Bruno, a man of many failings, but the one man in Europe who had discerned the stupendous intellectual consequences of the Copernican theory. Sidney, who had studied astronomy in Italy, must have been deeply interested, and his sympathy with the Italian refugee may have contributed to the more ardent part he began to take in matters of State. He vehemently urged an attack on Spain, but, when an expedition to the Low Countries was determined upon, accepted a command under his uncle Leicester. It is needless to repeat the story of his heroic fate at Zutphen, just as he was giving the highest proofs of capacity as statesman and soldier. A wound, due to his own romantic but mistaken spirit of chivalry, resulted in his death on October 17, 1586. The mournful pageant of his funeral procession in the following February remained unrivalled by any similar public display until the funeral of Nelson. "It was accounted a sin for months afterwards for any gentleman of quality to wear gay apparel in London." In Sidney, indeed, Elizabethan literature had lost its morning star; and arts, arms, and politics their Admirable Crichton.

Sidney's  
"Arcadia"

In the *Arcadia* Sidney shows what he might have done for literature had not his time (most justifiably in his case, his rank in the State considered) been so largely claimed by Courts and camps. In his one brief interval of disgrace and withdrawal from court the activity of his mind, stimulated by his sister's companionship and, perhaps, aided by her pen, sufficed to produce this folio volume, the English counterpart of the pastorals of Sannazaro and Montemayor. As such, it necessarily occupies a commanding position in English literature, and although a most faulty performance, its very faults are the paradoxical condition of its



Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester

*After the portrait by Zuccero*

merits. Its great fault of being far too long was no fault in that age of leisure, and signifies little in an age when, if ever so much abbreviated, it still would not be read. On the contrary, this diffuseness is a gain to modern readers, who, feeling themselves dispensed from the obligation of mastering so intricate a plot and contending with so superhuman a discursiveness, simply wander through it like wayfarers through a forest, intent solely upon gathering flowers. These abound, though a large proportion must be classed with flowers of speech in the less favourable sense, and Sidney fatigues like Matho<sup>1</sup> by the effort after perpetual glitter. This has been attributed to the influence of Lyly, but with all his affectation his style falls far short of euphuism, and the attempt to dignify familiar and especially pas-

toral subjects by high-flown speech is as old as the Greek romancers, and is very conspicuous in Boccaccio. Sidney offends rather by the constancy of this endeavour than by positive extravagance of diction; a less continuous and obtrusive deflection from ordinary speech would have been even acceptable, as reminding us that we are and are meant to be denizens of an ideal world. The following, one of many beautiful descriptions, evinces how well Sidney could depict what he had himself seen and known. He was a consummate horseman, the *Defence of Poetry* begins with the celebration of his Italian riding-master. No doubt he had often "witched the world with noble horsemanship," as Dorus witches Pamela :

<sup>1</sup> Omnia vis belle Matho dicere ; dic aliquando  
Vel bene ; dic neutrum ; dic aliquando male.



Sir Philip Sidney.

AFTER THE MINIATURE BY ISAAC OLIVER IN THE ROYAL LIBRARY AT WINDSOR CASTLE.



He stayed till I caused Mopsa bid him do something upon his horse ; which no sooner said, than with a kind rather of quick gesture than show of violence, you might see him come towards me, beating the ground in so due time as no dancer can observe better measure. If you remember the ship we saw once when the sea went high upon the coast of Argos, so went the beast. But he, as if centaur like he had been one piece with the horse, was no more moved than one with the going of his own legs ; and in effect so did he command him as his own limbs : for though he had both spurs and wand, they seemed rather marks of sovereignty than instruments of punishment, his hand and leg, with most pleasing grace, commanding without threatening, and rather remembering than chastising ; at least if sometimes he did, it was so stolen as neither our eyes could discern it, nor the horse with any change did complain of it : he ever going so just with the horse, either forthright or turning, that it seemed as he borrowed the horse's body, so he lent the horse his mind. In the turning one might perceive the bridle hand somewhat gently stir ; but indeed so gently, as it did rather distil virtue, than use violence. Himself, which methinks is strange, showing at one instant both steadiness and nimbleness ; sometimes making him turn close to the ground like a cat, when scratchingly she wheels about after a mouse : sometimes with a little move rising before ; now like a raven leaping from ridge to ridge, then like one of Dametas' kids bound over the hillocks ; and all so done as neither the lusty kind showed any roughness, nor the easier any idleness, but still like a well obeyed master, whose beck is enough for a discipline, ever concluding each thing he did with his face to me-wards, as if thence came not only the beginning, but the ending of his motions.

THE  
COVNTESSE  
OF PEMBROKES  
ARCADIA,

WRITTEN BY SIR PHILIPPE  
SIDNEI.

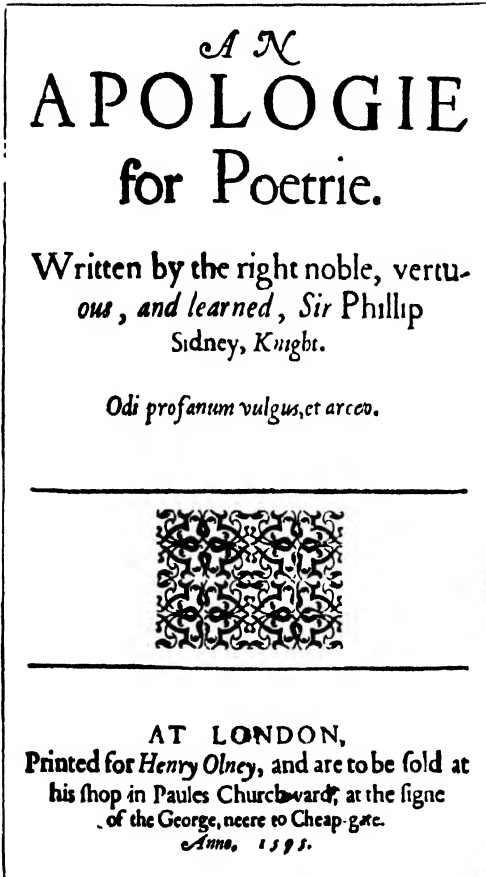


LONDON  
Printed for William Ponsonbie.  
*Anno Domini, 1590.*

Title-page of Sidney's "Arcadia," 1590

It would be fatiguing to unravel the plot of the *Arcadia*, intricate and remote from the possibilities of life as those of the Greek and Italian romances upon which it is modelled, and pestered with episodes, as the solar system with comets. The characters excite no very lively interest, but are appropriate to their chivalric and pastoral surroundings. The book can never again be popular, but neither can it ever be forgotten ; and a judicious abridgment might even now be a literary success. Most of the poetry would in such a case disappear, as too palpably artificial and mechanical, although it is impossible not to admire the intellectual energy and command of language

which could produce so much really good writing to order, frequently in interesting though unsuccessful experiments, probably made under the influence of Gabriel Harvey, in the introduction of classical metres into English, and the naturalisation of foreign forms like the *terza rima* and the *sestine*. Sometimes a genuine blossom of song is encountered among the artificial flowers :



Title-page of Sidney's "Apology for Poetry," 1595

must have been written after the marriage of Penelope Devereux, the object of Sidney's too Platonic attachment, to Lord Rich, and consequently must have an autobiographic basis. This seems sufficiently clear from internal evidence. Sonnet 33, for example, manifestly expresses Sidney's remorse for having failed to win the lady's hand while it was yet to be won :

I might !—unhappy now !—O me, I might  
And then would not, or could not, see my bliss ;  
Till now, wrapt in a most infernal night,  
I find how heavenly day, wretch ! I did miss,  
Heart, rend thyself, thou dost thyself but right ;

<sup>1</sup> Wretch.

Get hence, fond Grief, the canker of  
the mind :

Farewell complaint, the miser's <sup>1</sup> only  
pleasure :

Away, vain Cares, by which few men  
do find

Their sought for treasure.

You helpless sighs, blow out your  
breath to nought :

Fears, drown yourselves for woe your  
cause is wasted :

Thought, think to end ; too long the  
fruit of thought

My mind hath tasted.

But thou, sure Hope, tickle my leap-  
ing heart :

Comfort, step thou in place of wonted  
sadness :

Fore-felt Desire, begin to savour part  
Of coming gladness.

Let voice of sighs into clear music  
run :

Eyes, let your tears with gazing be  
now mended :

Instead of Thought, true Pleasure be  
begun,

And never ended.

The genuineness of the feeling in *Astrophel and Stella* has been a subject of discussion, but Mr. Symonds and Mr. Courthope, who represent opposite views on this question, agree that the sonnets

No lovely Paris made thy Helen his :  
 No force, no fraud, robbed thee of thy delight,  
 Nor fortune of thy fortune author is.  
 But to myself myself did give the blow.  
 While too much wit, forsooth, so troubled me,  
 That I respects for both our sakes must show :  
 And yet could not by rising morn foresee  
 How fair a day was near : O punished eyes,  
 That I had been more foolish, or more wise !

Sonnet 87, with its speech of duty, affords conclusive proof of Stella having been a married, or at least a betrothed, woman :

When I was forced from Stella ever dear—  
 Stella, food of my thoughts, heart of my heart—  
 Stella, whose eyes make all my tempests clear—  
 Dy Stella's laws of duty to depart ;  
 Alas ! I found that she with me did smart ;  
 I saw that tears did in her eyes appear ;  
 I saw that sighs her sweetest lips did part,  
 And her sad words my saddened sense did hear.  
 For me, I wept to see pearls scattered so ;  
 I sighed her sighs, and wailed for her woe ;  
 Yet swam in joy, such love in her was seen.  
 Thus while the effect most bitter was to me,  
 And nothing than the cause more sweet could be,  
 I had been vexed, if vexed I had not been.

If any doubt could remain, it should be sufficient to weigh the poetical merit of the Stella sonnets, addressed to the heroine of a real history, against the mere elegance of the verse of the *Arcadia*, composed to comply with a convention. In *Astrophel and Stella* Sidney appears for the first time as a true poet, and far in advance of any predecessor in his own line. It does not thence follow that his passion was of a very intense character. It was genuine while it lasted, but gratification would soon have killed it, and even disappointment could not long keep it alive. It never forbids his helping himself out with an appropriation from a French or Italian poet, or turning aside to mere ingenuities, like the following exceedingly pretty but exceedingly palpable conceit :

Morpheus, the lively son of deadly Sleep,  
 Witness of life to them that living die,  
 A prophet oft, and oft an history,  
 A poet eke, as humours fly or creep ;  
 Since thou in me so sure a power dost keep,

*Sidney's  
 Sonnets to  
 Stella*



Initial Letter from Sidney's "*Arcadia*," 1590

That never I with closed-up sense do lie,  
 But by thy work my Stella I descry,  
 Teaching blind eyes both how to smile and weep;  
 Vouchsafe, of all acquaintance, this to tell,  
 Whence hast thou ivory, rubies, pearl and gold,  
 To show her skin, lips, teeth and head so well?  
 Fool! answers he, no Indes such treasures hold;  
 But from thy heart, while my sire charmeth thee,  
 Sweet Stella's image do I steal to me.

Sidney at his best, it will be admitted, is in the sonnet no unworthy



Map and View of the Town of Zutphen, the scene of Sidney's death

forerunner of Shakespeare. Had he bent himself to acclimatise the Petrarchan form of the sonnet he might have been a precursor of Milton also. It will be noticed that the form of sonnet he employs frequently approaches that of Spenser, who begins each quatrain with a rhyme to the last line of the quatrain preceding, in attempting a compromise between the Petrarchan sonnet and the characteristically English succession of three quatrains concluding with a couplet. He clearly recognised the superiority of the Petrarchan form, and would probably have adopted it if he had been able to overcome its difficulties. Yet it is hardly a matter for regret that he shrunk from the attempt; or while the Petrarchan form is far more artistic, and fitter for the expression of a single grave or graceful thought, the more rapid flow of the English sonnet often adapts it better for the expression of simple but earnest feeling.



Had Sidney set the example Shakespeare might have followed it, and it is doubtful whether his sonnets would have gained by being Petrarchised.

Sidney's *Defence of Poetry* is a remarkable essay, not a model of close consecutive reasoning, but undertaken in a spirit of love and devotion to what the author has himself found precious, and hence itself in some sort a poem. Sidney does not confine poetry to metrical composition. "It is not riming and versing that maketh poetry. One may be a poet without versing, and a versifier without poetry." Poetry is with him the antithesis of Philistinism, and denotes whatever elevates and purifies the mind, and casts an ideal hue over life. The poet is to him the great enchanter. "Nature never set forth the earth in so rich tapestry as many poets have

*The "Defence of Poetry"*



A portion of the great Procession at the Funeral of Sir Philip Sidney

*From Lauf's "Sequitur Celebritas Pompa Funeris," 1587*

done; neither with pleasant rivers, fruitful trees, sweet smelling flowers, nor whatsoever else may make the too much loved earth more lovely; her world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden." From his own experience of the effects of poetry he relates: "Certainly I must confess my own barbarousness. I never heard the old song of Percy and Douglas that I felt not my heart moved more than with a trumpet; and yet it is a song sung but by some blind crowder, with no rougher voice than rude style; which being so evil appared in the dust and cobwebs of that uncivil age, what would it work trimmed in the gorgeous eloquence of Pindar?" He admits the inferiority of English poetry to that of other polite nations, and ascribes it to want of encouragement: "That poetry thus embraced in all other places, should only find in our time a hard welcome in England, I think, the very

earth lamenteth it, and therefore decketh our soil with fewer laurels than it was accustomed." The fault is not in the language, whose fitness for poetry Sidney proclaims with no less eloquence than truth. He speaks, nevertheless, with high commendation of Sackville's *Gorboduc*, and encouragingly of Spenser's early efforts. The greatest distinction of Chaucer seems to have escaped him, though, if the *Canterbury Tales* were, in general, too familiar for his taste, the *Knight's Tale* could hardly fail to attract him. *Troilus and Creseide*, however, is his favourite. "Excellently is his *Troilus and Creseide*, of whom truly I know not whether to marvel more that he in that misty time could see so clearly, or that we in this clear age walk so stumbingly after him." In Surrey also, in so many respects his own counterpart, Sidney finds "many things tasting of a noble birth, and worthy of a noble mind." The weakest part of his criticism is that on dramatic poetry: he disapproves of the mingling of tragedy and comedy to which the drama was to owe its regeneration, and would have confined it, like the drama of Italy, to the narrow limits traced by classical precedent. No doubt the English drama as then performed was infinitely shocking to a refined taste, and the prodigious development it was to receive within ten years was not in mortal to foresee. In so far, moreover, as Sidney is merely a literary critic he writes as the disciple of the Italians; it is only when, transcending technical rules, he concerns himself with ideas, that he finds his veritable self.

Little as Sidney is of a utilitarian, the practical importance of poetry is strenuously asserted by him:

Now therein of all sciences I speak still of human, and according to the human concert is our poet the monarch. For he doth not only show the way, but giveth so sweet a prospect into the way as will entice every man to enter into it. Nay he doth as if your journey should be through a fair vineyard, at the very first give you a cluster of grapes, that full of that taste you may long to pass further. He beginneth not with obscure definitions, which must blur the margin with interpretations, and load the memory with doubtfulness. But he cometh to you with words set in delightful proportion, either accompanied with, or prepared for, the well-enchanting skill of music; and with a tale forsooth he cometh unto you, with a tale which holdeth children from play, and old men from the chimney corner, and, by pretending no more, doth intend the winning of the mind from wickedness to virtue.

The exact date of Sidney's tractate is uncertain, but from the mention of Spenser's first poetical attempts it must be later than 1578: and as he professes to undertake it in the character of a poet, it may probably have been written after the *Arcadia* and *Astrophel and Stella* had given him an unquestionable claim to this designation. It seems to have been prompted by indignation at the attacks upon poetry made by Stephen Gosson in 1579; but Gosson, who had impudently dedicated his libel to Sidney himself, would scarcely have escaped castigation by name if Sidney had written in the first flush of resentment.

Sir Walter  
Raleigh

With Sidney, SIR WALTER RALEIGH ranks among the four great prose-writers of the Elizabethan age. As is so frequently the case with illustrious

Flushing Aug<sup>1</sup> 74. 1506

Bright honorable my singular good Lord  
I humbly beseech your L<sup>y</sup> to vouchsafe  
the hearing ~~in~~ <sup>of</sup> Burnes's case which  
case for all sort of mutation we  
are in this town. I think Sir Thomas  
Cecil will be in the like of those  
exceedingly - in your L<sup>y</sup>s honorable care  
thereof. The places being so great  
moment if we be turned over  
to the States it is as good as  
nothing, and it shall be no loss  
to her Ma<sup>y</sup> to have some done  
under an officer of her own whom it  
shall please her not to be spent but  
upon urgent necessity the garnish  
is wear the people by the cross  
fortune crossly disposed, and this is my  
conclusion if the 2. places be kept  
her Ma<sup>y</sup> hath more her money  
on all extremities, if the short be less  
none of the rest will hold a day



contemporaries, these great men present both close parallels and vivid contrasts, but each is a characteristic representative of his time. Sidney, however, rather mirrors the ideal of the age, Raleigh its actual condition; for the former, Shelley's impassioned eulogium, "sublimely mild, a spirit without spot," scarcely seems too bold; while Raleigh, with the highest qualities of the soldier, the statesman, and the gentleman, incarnates the suppleness of the courtier and the unscrupulousness of the adventurer as well. Regarding them simply as men of letters, it appears remarkable that the more original part should have been allotted to the less original mind. Sidney is an innovator and almost a legislator in the romance, the sonnet, and the literary essay. Raleigh follows old paths in composition, and his works are chiefly distinguished by superior merit of execution.

Raleigh was born in or about 1552, at Hayes, near Budleigh Salterton, Devon. His father was a country gentleman, whose property lay near Plymouth; his mother, widow of Otho Gilbert, was mother by her first marriage of the famous navigator, Sir Humphrey Gilbert. As the second son of a third marriage Raleigh could be no sharer in the patrimonial estate, but he appears to have been well nurtured, though intercourse with sailors and peasants, destined to become profitable, gave him the broad Devonshire accent which he never lost. Like Bacon and Sidney he both sought and left the University at an early age. Like them also, he proceeded to France, not, however, as a diplomatist or a traveller, but as a volunteer with the Huguenots, being, according to his own statement, present at Jarnac and in the disastrous

. . . . hour

When the children of darkness and evil had power

at Moncontour. This is all that is known of his residence in France, which was probably long, as no trace of him is found in England until 1576, when he prefixed a congratulatory poem to the "Steel Glass" of George Gascoigne, an intimate friend of his half-brother, Sir Humphrey Gilbert. It is highly probable that he may have served in the Low Countries, but no record remains.

In September 1578 we at last find Raleigh taking a prominent part in a great enterprise as commander of a vessel in his half-brother Sir Humphrey Gilbert's voyage of discovery, or rather of intended conquest, to America and the West Indies. It returned unsuccessful in the following May, and Raleigh betook himself to Court, where he appears in the picturesque character of the bearer of a challenge to Sir Philip Sidney from the Earl of Oxford. Similar affairs caused him to be imprisoned on two separate occasions. The Elizabethan courtier was, indeed,

Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,

but Raleigh proved that he was no less ready to

Seek the bubble reputation

Even in the cannon's mouth,

by accepting a command in Ireland. There is reason to suppose that he indirectly owed this turning-point in his fortunes to the interest of Sidney (whose life he is said to have protected against the machinations of his enemy Oxford) with the all-powerful Leicester and Walsingham. After a year and a half of

honourable service, during which he was for a time on the Commission for the Government of Munster, he returned to England as the bearer of despatches, and sprang at once into the highest favour with Elizabeth. The anecdote of his having laid down his cloak to help the Queen across a muddy path, if not literally true, as it well may be, at all events resumes and symbolises the happy boldness, unflinching presence of mind, and brisk and gallant bearing which won him Elizabeth's affection. Within a few years the needy cadet of a family of moderate estate was Captain of the Queen's Guard, Warder of the Stannaries,



Ruins of Collegiate Church and House of the Earl of Desmond at Youghal, the residence of Raleigh in Ireland

Lord Lieutenant of Cornwall, Vice-Admiral of Cornwall and Devon, owner of forty thousand acres in Ireland, including the whole town of Youghal, and endowed with a sheaf of lucrative patents and monopolies. If, as asserted by the Spanish Ambassador, the recipient of all these favours was an accomplice in Babington's conspiracy, he must have been the most ungrateful of mankind, but as he must also have been the most foolish we may safely conclude that his Excellency, then expelled from England and resident at Paris, was deceived by his agents at a distance. We may indeed observe by the way that the ambassadors of the sixteenth century, the Venetian excepted, were the greatest *gobemouches* conceivable, hungry for news "as the Red Sea for ghosts," lest they should be deemed unprofitable servants, and that history will suffer if their assertions are accepted

without scrutiny. Raleigh does, however, appear in Mendoza's correspondence as one generally disposed to promote Spanish interests, but King Philip seems to have entertained shrewd suspicions of the genuineness of these professions.

If any rumours of his complicity in the Babington conspiracy reached Elizabeth's ears, she showed her disregard of them by making him a considerable grant from the forfeited estates. This was in 1587; in 1584 Raleigh had obtained the patent which launched him upon the colonial career which, with all his varied activity in arms and letters, constitutes his highest title to fame. In the preceding year he had contributed largely to the voyage of his half-brother, Sir Humphrey Gilbert, which resulted in the settlement of the first English colony, Newfoundland. Sir Humphrey having been lost at sea, Raleigh, who had only been prevented

from accompanying him by the Queen's prohibition, obtained the patent "to discover and conquer unknown lands, and take possession of them in the Queen's name," which eventually led to the occupation of the region to which Elizabeth herself gave the name of Virginia. Raleigh fitted out another expedition, and drew up the constitution of the projected colony. But the enterprise was mis-managed; a fresh expedition sent out to relieve the colonists could find no trace of them; and although Raleigh continued his efforts until the forfeiture of his patent in 1603, he achieved no result. The persistency of his endeavours, nevertheless, entitles him to the most eminent place among the founders of



Irish Men and Women in the reign of Elizabeth

*British Museum, Add. MS. 28330*

Britain's colonial empire. The most conspicuous of the immediate results of his labours were the introduction of potatoes and tobacco, both, indeed, previously known, but which he first rendered popular.

There is no evidence of Raleigh having taken any personal part in repelling the Armada, and it is probable that his duty of embodying the militia as Lord Lieutenant of Cornwall would detain him on shore. In the latter part of the year, and again in 1589, he was in Ireland, where he formed a friendship with Spenser, who celebrates him as "The Shepherd of the Ocean," and describes him as playing upon Spenser's own pipe, "himself as skilful in that art as any." In 1591 he was to have been second in command of an expedition to intercept

the Spanish treasure fleet ; but the Queen refused to let him go, and his place was taken by his cousin, Sir Richard Grenville, whose heroic combat and death he celebrated in his first important prose work, *Report of the Truth of the Fight about the Isles of the Azores*, a noble piece of writing, which forms the groundwork of Tennyson's famous ballad. In the following year he invested all the money he could raise in a naval expedition planned for the capture of a great treasure-laden Spanish carrack, and was putting to sea at the head of it when he was suddenly ordered to return. His days of favour were over ; he had wounded his royal mistress's sense of decorum, and worse, her vanity, by an intrigue with one of her maids of honour, and was detained in prison till near the end of the year, except for a brief liberation that he might use his local influence to prevent the Devonshire people from plundering the carrack, which had been captured without him. Upon his release he married the object of his attachment, Elizabeth



Sherborne Castle

*From a photograph*

Throgmorton, for whom his affection seems to have been deep and lasting, and settled at Sherborne Castle, spending, however, much time in London in the discharge of his Parliamentary duties and in the intimacy of men of letters and science. He resumed his long poem, *Cynthia, the Lady of the Sea*, which he must have commenced before receiving from Spenser the title of "The Shepherd of the Ocean." "The Lady of the Sea" is Elizabeth, and the

author probably represented his devout obedience to his mistress under the figure of "the moon-led waters." All is lost except the twenty-first book, which reveals little of the plan of the poem, the allegorical machinery being discarded for direct reference to the poet's offended sovereign, eloquent indeed, but so prolix as almost to justify his naïve apprehension that, instead of softening her heart he will shut her eyes :

Leave them ! or lay them up with thy despairs !  
 She hath resolved and judged thee long ago.  
 Thy lines are now a murmuring to her ears,  
 Like to a falling stream, which, passing slow,

Is wont to nourish sleep and quietness ;  
 So shall thy painful labours be perused,  
 And draw in rest, which sometime had regard ;  
 But those her cares thy errors have excused.

The imperfect rhymes and frequent gaps show that this part of the poem at least had not received Raleigh's final corrections. The earlier cantos were known to many, and their disappearance is extraordinary. Raleigh is almost the only considerable English author who has suffered by the total loss of important





Sir Walter Raleigh.

AFTER THE PORTRAIT ATTRIBUTED TO ZUCCARO.



writings. Not only *Cynthia* is lost, but many prose works, including, if Ben Jonson is to be believed, a life of Elizabeth.

Raleigh's restless spirit soon suggested more active measures for winning distinction and regaining the favour of his sovereign. In 1595 he made his celebrated expedition to Guiana, misled by reports of the fabulous El Dorado, but right in so far as Guiana was actually a land of gold, whose wealth it was beyond his power to bring to light. His accuracy as respects everything falling under his own observation has been fully confirmed, and nothing discreditable to him appears either in the conception or the conduct of the expedition. England and Spain were at war, and Raleigh had every right to instruct the Indians respecting "Ezrabeta Cassipuna Aquerevana, the great cacique of the North, who had more caciques under her than there were trees in their island," who had sent him to free them from the Castellanos. He showed them her Majesty's portrait; "it would have been easy to have brought them idolatrous thereof." His narrative was published in 1596, in which year he also brilliantly distinguished himself in Essex's expedition against Cadiz. Another expedition in the following year, also under Essex's orders, failed in its object of capturing the Spanish treasure-ships, and unhappily laid the foundation of a mortal enmity between Essex and Raleigh from Raleigh having taken Fayal without Essex's orders. He was undoubtedly right, but his subsequent conduct to Essex was wanting in generosity. He soon found himself in Essex's situation. For two years before James I.'s accession, the new King's mind had been poisoned against Raleigh by insinuations that he was plotting to bring in Lady Arabella Stuart. The truth is most difficult to ascertain; if a man of Raleigh's sagacity was seduced into so wild and desperate a course, it is one of the most striking examples on record of the subjugation of judgment by ambition. Deprived as he was of most of his offices upon James's arrival, he may have been led into giving some countenance to Lord Cobham's conspiracy in the summer of 1603, but the only positive evidence is the declaration of Cobham himself, a person worthy of little credit. Raleigh was, nevertheless, indicted, tried, convicted, sentenced to death, reprieved, and imprisoned in the Tower, where he remained fourteen years, solacing his captivity by the composition of his *History of the World*. Better fitted to command the devotion of inferiors than to conciliate the goodwill of equals, he seems to have entirely failed to obtain the confidence of the leading statesmen of his time, who distrusted him as an adventurer, and whose envy at his promotion had probably been exasperated by his haughty bearing. The popularity which he enjoyed among the commonalty counted for little; he had built, like Bacon, on Court favour, and when this failed nothing stood between him and ruin. He, nevertheless, began to rebuild his fortunes in a new quarter. The heir-apparent disapproved of his father's policy in most respects, and in none more than the persecution of Raleigh, who might well have become his chief adviser if he had lived to ascend the throne. In Prince Henry's fatal illness, as appears by a letter from Chamberlain to Carleton, in the State Paper Office, a cordial was sent him by Sir Walter Raleigh, "who loses by his death his greatest hope of release." In another letter the same writer says of the Prince: "His papers show that he had many vast conceits and projects"—some of them, in all likelihood, inspirations from Raleigh, who deplores his blighted hopes in the *History of the World*, published in 1614. James, irritated by the freedom



but the means he adopted to obtain it, no doubt the only means at his disposal, were tainted with deceit. Persuading the Government to send him out on another expedition to Guiana, he concealed the fact that the mine he undertook to discover was in the territory of Spain, then at peace with England, and, while denying any evil intention, combined his scheme with a projected piratical attack upon the Spanish treasure-galleons. He had fair notice from the Government that an act of piracy would forfeit his life, and when in June 1618 he returned to England, after a series of disasters which cannot be read without the deepest compassion, no blame could have been attached to the Government if they had brought him to a fair trial and executed a just sentence. Their cowardice in avoiding the issue, and iniquity in executing him upon the old charge of the Cobham conspiracy, joined to the universal belief that the motive was not the vindication of justice but the propitiation of Spain, made him more than ever a popular hero, a character enhanced by his spirited bearing on the scaffold, where his wit and presence of mind emulated Sir Thomas More.



An illustration by John White to Raleigh's  
"Voyage into Virginia," 1585

As a writer of prose Raleigh stands very high; his diction is elegant and unaffectedly dignified, less magnificent than Hooker's but free from cumbrousness and inversion; approaching modern ease and lucidity, yet retaining antique stateliness; the style of a scholar, yet of a courtier and man of the world. Were it not for these recommendations the work upon which his fame as an author principally rests, *The History of the World*, composed during his captivity in the Tower, would be as unserviceable to his own reputation as to the student, for it is of necessity entirely uncritical. Raleigh can do nothing but follow the Biblical and classical historians along a darkling path, in total ignorance of the floods of light with which it was to be illuminated by science and discovery. But for gleams of genius his book could have been but another Rollin, but it is continually irradiated by striking thoughts and by flashes of digression, as where the author speaks from his

"*The History of the World*"

own observation of South American mangroves laden with oysters, or describes the daring stratagem by which Sark was won back from the French in Queen Mary's time, or anticipates Erasmus Darwin by discovering the variability of species, or astonishes us by a passage of *Æschylus* felicitously rendered from the Latin version (Raleigh evidently was little versed in Greek) into rhyme royal :—

But Fortune governed all their works, till when  
I first found out how stars did set and rise,  
A profitable art to mortal men,  
And others of like use I did devise;  
As, letters to compose and learned pen  
I first did teach, and first did amplify  
The Mother of the Muses, Memory.

The work was partly undertaken at the request and for the instruction of Prince Henry, who, Raleigh tells us, read part of it in MS. with approval. It extends from the Creation to the overthrow of the Macedonian Kingdom, B.C. 168. Two more parts of equal extent were designed, but if any more was written it has not been preserved. In his preface Raleigh tells us something of his principles of composition, and explains how he has “followed the best geographers, who seldom give names to those small brooks whereof many joined together, make great rivers, till such time as they become united, and run in a main stream to the ocean sea.” Feeling that the erudition required by his comprehensive theme may expose him to the charge of plagiarism, he acknowledges how greatly he is beholden to the assistance of friends, without on that account abating his just though modest estimate of his qualifications :—

I am not altogether ignorant of the laws of history, and of the kinds. The same hath been taught by many, but by no man better, and with greater brevity, than by that excellent learned gentleman, Sir Francis Bacon.

Bacon had helped to send Raleigh to the Tower, and was to help to send him to the scaffold, yet we see that his writings had solaced Raleigh's captivity. “The animosities die, the humanities live for ever.” There are other traces of Raleigh's acquaintance with contemporary as well as ancient literature. The celebrated and very fine passage on the influences of the stars is clearly adapted from Du Bartas, yet with a dignity precluding the charge of plagiarism.

And if we cannot deny, but that God hath given virtue to springs and fountains, to cold earth, to plants and stones, minerals, and the excremental parts of the basest living creatures, why should we rob the beautiful stars of their working powers? For, seeing they are many in number, and of eminent beauty and magnitude, we may not think that in the treasury of his wisdom who is infinite, there can be wanting, even for every star, a peculiar virtue and operation; as every herb, plant, fruit, and flower adorning the face of the earth hath the like. For as these were not created to beautify the earth alone, and to cover and shadow her dusty face, but otherwise for the use of man and beast, to feed them and cure them, so were not those uncountable glorious bodies set in the firmament for no other end

than to adorn it, but for his instruments and organs of his divine providence so far as it has pleased his great will to determine.

Du Bartas thus, in Sylvester's translation :—

I'll not believe that the Arch Architect  
With all these fires the heavenly arches decked  
Only for show, and with these glittering shields  
To amaze poor shepherds watching in the fields.  
I'll not believe that the least flower which pranks  
Our garden-borders, or our common banks,  
And the least stone that in her warming lap  
Our mother Earth doth covetously wrap,  
Hath some peculiar virtue of its own,  
And that the stars of heaven have none.

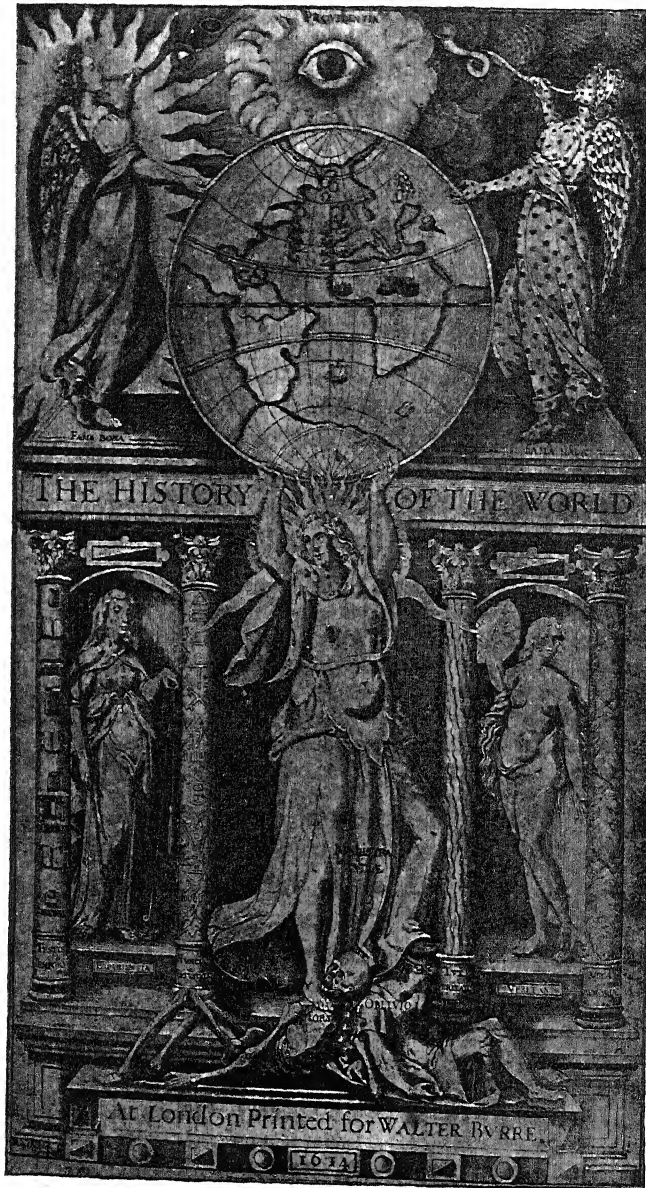
*The History of the World* is not sparingly sown with fine passages resembling the above, and there is another class of passages not fine but most interesting—descriptions of battles and military operations which bear the impress of the skilful and experienced soldier. Such merits, however, cannot impart vitality to a work so flawed and faulty in the essential basis of all history, accurate knowledge. If, instead of the history of ancient times, Raleigh had written that of his own, he would have conferred a priceless service upon literature, and ranked with the most eminent historians. Nor did this escape him, but he assigns unanswerable reasons why it could not be :—

It will be said by many that I might have been more pleasing to the reader if I had written the story of mine own times, having been permitted to draw water as near the well head as another. To this I answer that whosoever, in writing a modern history, shall follow truth too near the heels, it may haply strike out his teeth. There is no mistress or guide than Truth hath led her followers and servants into greater miseries. He that goes after her too far off loveth her sight and loveth himself ; and he that follows after her at a middle distance—I know not whether I should call that kind of course temper or baseness.

Raleigh himself cannot be entirely acquitted of flattering James, though most of his eulogy has at least a foundation in truth, and he is a model of reserve compared to Bacon. He seems, indeed, to escape as soon as possible from James's personality to the advantage which the State had undoubtedly derived from his accession. If he is sincere—and it is difficult to think him otherwise—he must have repented having espoused the cause of Arabella Stuart, if he really did so :—

Neither might we forget or neglect our thankfulness to God for the uniting of the smaller parts of Britain to the south, viz., of Scotland to England, which, though they were severed but by small brooks and banks, yet by reason of the long continued war, and the cruelties exercised upon each other, in the affection of the nations they were infinitely severed. This, I say, is not the least of God's blessings which his majesty hath brought with him into this land, no, put all our petty grievances together, and heap them up at their height, they will appear but as a molehill, compared with the mountain of this concord. And if all the historians since then have acknowledged the uniting of the red rose and the white, for the greatest happiness (Christian religion excepted) whatever this kingdom received from God, certainly the peace between the two lions of gold and gules, and the making of them one, doth by many degrees exceed the former ; for by it, besides the sparing

of our British blood, heretofore and during the differences so often and abundantly shed, the state of England is more assured, the kingdom more enabled to recover her ancient honour and rights, and by it made more invincible than by all our former alliances, practices, policies, and conquests.



Title-page of first edition of Raleigh's "History of the World"

Towards the close of his work Raleigh resumes and surpasses the grand manner of his introduction. In some measure this ascent to a higher region of thought and expression has impaired the reputation of the book, which has



been treated as though, like the glowworm, it carried all its light in its tail. In fact, dry as large portions are, the book is everywhere incandescent with suppressed fire, but it is only at the conclusion that Raleigh shows how great a writer he might have been if he had always written on themes admitting the unrestrained exercise of his eloquence :—

By this which we have already set down is seen the beginning and end of the three first monarchies of the world, whereof the founders and erectors thought that they could never have ended. That of Rome, which made the fourth, was also at this time almost the highest. We have left it flourishing in the middle of the field ; having rooted up, or cut down, all that kept it from the eyes and admiration of the world. But after some continuance it shall begin to lose the beauty it had ; the storms of ambition shall beat her great boughs and branches one against another ; her leaves shall fall off, her limbs wither ; and a rabble of barbarian nations enter the field, and cut her down.

Now these great kings and conquering nations have been the subject of those ancient histories which have been preserved and yet remain among us ; and with them of so many tragical poets as in the persons of powerful princes and other mighty men have complained against infidelity, time, destiny, and, most of all, against the variable success of worldly things, and instability of fortune. To these undertakings these great lords of the world have been stirred up rather by the desire of fame, which plougheth up the air, and soweth in the wind, than by the affection of bearing rule, which draweth after it so much vexation and so many cares : and that this is true, the good advice of Cneas to Pyrrhus proves. And, certainly, as fame has often been dangerous to the living, so is it to the dead of no use at all ; because separate from knowledge. Which, were it otherwise, and the extreme ill bargain of buying this last discourse understood by them which were dissolved, they themselves would then rather have wished to have stolen out of the world without noise, than to be put in mind that they have purchased the report of their actions in the world by rapine, oppression and cruelty ; by giving in spoil the innocent and labouring soul to the idle and insolent, and by having emptied the cities of their ancient inhabitants, and filled them again with so many and so variable sorts of sorrows.

The theme is pursued further, and concludes with the famous apostrophe which has been justly described as rivalling the finest passages in Sir Thomas Browne :—

It is Death alone that can suddenly make man to know himself. He tells the proud and insolent that they are but abjects, and humbles them at the instant, makes them cry, complain and repent, yea, even to hate their forepast happiness. He takes the account of the rich, and proves him a beggar, a naked beggar, which hath interest in nothing but in the gravel that fills his mouth. He holds a glass before the eyes of the most beautiful, and makes them see therein their deformity and rottenness, and they acknowledge it.

O eloquent, just, and mighty Death ! whom none could advise, thou hast persuaded ; what none have dared, thou hast done ; and whom all the world have flattered, thou only hast cast out of the world and despised ; thou hast drawn together all the far-stretched greatness, all the pride, cruelty, and ambition of man, and covered it all over with these two narrow words, *Hic jacet !*

If Raleigh had written his *Discoverie of Guiana* as a modern traveller of his literary power would have written it, he would have made a great book upon a subject so instinct with romance and appropriate for the embellishments of magnificent description. Raleigh, however, could not place himself at Kingsley's point of view ; his object was, and under his circumstances must

have been, utilitarian—his book is not an epic but a prospectus. He preaches the advantages for England of the colonisation of Guiana, and enforces his argument by glowing descriptions of the wealth of the imaginary Manoa or El Dorado to which Guiana was to be the portal, mainly derived from Spanish sources, and in which there is no reason to question his genuine belief. After Mexico and Peru nothing seemed impossible. Raleigh cannot be censured for believing what was told him on apparently good authority, any more than for his belief in another class of fictions transferred from the Old World to the New; though Shakespeare, a friend of his enemy Essex, may be thought to glance at him when he speaks of travellers' tales of

. . . . men whose heads  
Do grow beneath their shoulders.

When, however, pyrites with a semblance of gold were actually entrusted to him, he recognised them for what they were, and he is careful to point out that his confident belief in the mineral wealth of the country is based upon the testimony of others: "It shall be found a weak policy in me either to betray myself or my country with imaginations, neither am I so far in love with that lodging, watching, care, peril, diseases, ill savoury bad fare, and many other mischiefs that accompany these voyages, as to woo myself again into any there, were I not assured that the sun covereth not so much riches in any part of the earth." The narrative is indeed full of records of hardship in the endless watery labyrinths of the Orinoco, sufficient to deter any but a very determined adventurer. "What with victuals being most fish, with the wet clothes of so many men thrust together and the heat of the sun, I will undertake there was never any prison in England that could be found more unsavoury and loathsome, especially to myself, who had for many years been dieted and cared for in a sort far differing." Passages like the following, giving the more brilliant side of the pictures, are infrequent in comparison:—

When we ran to the top of the first hills of the plains adjoining the river, we beheld that wonderful breach of waters which ran down [the river] Caroli; and might from that mountain see the river turn, it ran in three parts, about twenty miles off, and there appeared some ten or twelve over-falls in sight, every one as high over the other as a church tower, which fell with that fury that the rebound of waters made it seem as if it had been all covered over with a great shower of rain; and in some places we took it at the first for a smoke that had risen over some great town. For mine own part I was well persuaded from thence to have returned, being a very ill footman, but the rest were all so desirous to go near the said strange thunder of waters, as they drew me by little and little, till we came into the next valley, where we might better discern the same. I never saw a more beautiful country, nor more lively prospects, hills so raised here and there over the vallies, the river winding into divers branches, the plains adjoining without brush or stubble, all fair green grass, the ground of hard sand easy to march on, either for horse or foot, the deer crossing in every path, the birds towards the evening singing on every tree with a thousand several tunes, cranes and herons of white, crimson, and carnation perching on the river's side, the air fresh with a gentle easterly wind, and every stone that we stooped to take up promised either gold or silver by his complexion.

Raleigh is credited with several minor publications, usually of political or ethical character, some of which are certainly spurious. The most important of these which may be regarded as genuine are *Maxims of State* and *The Prorogation of Parliament*, both written during his captivity in the Tower, and *Advice to a Son*, worldly wise but pitched in the very lowest key of feeling. There is nothing immoral or exactly reprehensible, but the observations on wedlock, for example, are exactly such as might have confirmed Shakespeare in his resolution to bequeath his wife his second best bed. It is remarkable that, until Rousseau's influence became potent, not a single writer from Bacon to Chesterfield was able to counsel the young without in some measure lowering his own reputation with posterity.

As a poet Raleigh belongs to the class of wits, of whom he is one of the first and best examples in our literature. Destitute of "the vision and faculty divine," he has *esprit*, the power of expressing himself with point and liveliness upon anything that has for the moment captivated his interest.

Hence, in the pieces of his that have been preserved, he appears almost exclusively in the character of an occasional poet. He would probably stand higher but for the loss of his one sustained effort, the *Cynthia*. Even this was prompted by Elizabeth's disfavour, but the allegorical scheme must have made large demands upon his fancy and constructive faculty. The fragment remaining can convey no just idea of the general character of the poem, and is, moreover, in a most unpolished state. Passages, however, show that it wants neither dignity of thought nor of expression :—

If to the living were my muse addressed,  
Or did my mind her own sprite still inhold ;



*Raleigh as a  
Poet*

**Sir Walter Raleigh**

*After the portrait at Knole*

Were not my living passion so repressed,  
As to the dead the dead did them unfold.

Some sweeter words, some more becoming verse,  
Should witness my mishap in higher kind.—  
But my love's wounds, my fancy in the hearse,  
The idea but resting of a wasted mind,

The blossoms fallen, the sap gone from the trees,  
The broken monuments of my great desires—  
From these so lost what may the affections be,  
What heat in cinders of extinguished fires ?

No doubt, however, Raleigh's special field in the domain of poetry was occasional verse, "the casual brilliance of a mind in constant activity." His intimacy with Marlowe had been sufficiently close to draw upon him the imputation of free-thinking, and when Marlowe produced his delightful lyric pastoral, "Come, live with me, and be my love," it was natural for Raleigh to respond in this half-serious half-mocking strain :—

If all the world and love were young,  
And truth in every shepherd's tongue,  
These pretty pleasures well might move  
To live with thee and be thy love.

But time drives flocks from field to fold,  
When rivers rage and rocks grow cold ;  
And Philomel becometh dumb ;  
The rest complain of cares to come.

The flowers do fade, and wanton fields  
To wayward winter reckoning yields.  
A honey tongue, a heart of gall,  
Is fancy's spring, but sorrow's fall.

Thy gowns, thy shoes, thy buds of roses,  
Thy cap, thy kirtle, and thy posies,  
Soon break, soon wither, soon forgotten,  
In folly ripe, in reason rotten.

Thy belt of straw and ivy buds,  
Thy coral clasps and amber studs,  
All these in me no means can move  
To come to thee and be thy love.

But could youth last, and youth still breed,  
Had joys no date, nor age no need,  
Then these delights my mind might move  
To live with thee and be thy love.

It should be remarked that the authorship of many lyrics ascribed to Raleigh is not entirely certain. None were printed as his in his lifetime, except complimentary verses prefixed to his friends' books. Several are attributed to other writers in MS. copies, and his editor, Dr. Hannah, has eliminated twenty-five on sufficient grounds. The reply to Marlowe, however, appears sufficiently authenticated not only by the friendship of the poets but by the testimony of Izaak Walton ; and if it is Raleigh's, so must be the

equally celebrated lyric *Passions*, which displays the same intellectual brightness and nimbleness. The complimentary verses are, of course, genuine, and if Raleigh had written nothing but the sonnet prefixed to Sir Arthur Gorges' *Lucan* he would have proved his ability to achieve a grave and stately strain. It is the more interesting as Gorges had served under Raleigh in the voyage of 1597, of which he was also the historian, and because, being written in the Tower in 1614, it is fraught with an undercurrent of reference to Raleigh himself :—

Had Lucan hid the truth to please the time,  
He had been too unworthy of thy pen,  
Who never sought nor ever cared to climb  
By flattery or seeking worthless men.  
For this thou hast been bruised, but yet those scars  
Do beautify no less than those wounds do,  
Received in just and in religious wars ;  
Though thou hast bled by both, and bearest them too.  
Change not ! to change thy fortune 'tis too late ;  
Who with a manly faith resolves to die  
May promise to himself a lasting state,  
Though not so great, yet free from infamy ;  
Such was thy Lucan, whom so to translate,  
Nature thy Muse like Lucan's did create.

If poems have been attributed to Raleigh without warrant, it is also possible that poems really by him circulated without his name. This may perhaps be the case with the graceful lines to Cynthia, Raleigh's poetical name for his royal mistress, lamenting the withdrawal of her favour, printed in Dowland's Music Book of 1597, even though in a copy found in an album of James I.'s time and translated by Goethe and printed in the correspondence of Thomas Lovell Beddoes the initials appended are not W. R. but W. S. It is such a piece as Raleigh might well have composed, and its elegant finish seems to indicate a practised hand :—

My thoughts are winged with hopes, my hopes with love ;  
Mount, Love, into the Moon in clearest night,  
And say, as she doth in the heaven move,  
In earth so wanes and waxes my delight ;  
And whisper this but softly in her ears,  
How oft Doubt hang the head and Trust shed tears.  
  
And you, my thoughts that seem mistrust to carry,  
If for mistrust my mistress do you blame,  
Say, though you alter yet you do not vary,  
As she doth change and yet remain the same.  
Distrust doth enter hearts but not infect,  
And love is sweetest seasoned with suspect.  
  
If she for this with clouds do mask her eyes,  
And make the heavens dark with her disdain,  
With windy sights<sup>1</sup> disperse then in the skies,  
Or with thy tears dissolve them into rain.  
Thoughts, hopes, and love return to me no more,  
Till Cynthia shine as she hath done before.

<sup>1</sup> Sighs : so written to avoid collision with "skies."

Raleigh's place in the literature of England resembles that of Cæsar in the literature of Rome—that of a well-nigh universal genius, excellent alike in prose and verse, who might have attained the highest place in the former at least if the man of letters had not with him been subordinate to the man of action. It says much for the era of Elizabeth that so brilliant a personage should at the same time be so much the man of his age. For this he is great, rather than for his adventurous exploits or his literary performances; even though these suffice to place him in the leading rank of both the doers and the writers of his time.

## CHAPTER II

### THE LESSER LIGHTS OF ELIZABETHAN PROSE

IN our last chapter, with some violence to strict chronological accuracy, we have treated of the four great prose-writers of the Elizabethan and, in the case of two of them, of the Jacobean era also, who stand forth conspicuously from the contemporary throng. These eliminated, we discern the better the affluence of the period in literary talent when we perceive how much remains after so vast a deduction. There is hardly any department without some representative with merit sufficient to have brought him down to our day as a writer to be remembered, and even consulted on other accounts than his relation to his time, or as an illustration of contemporary manners or of the progress of the language: and this after abstracting the poetry and drama which, apart from the four great writers considered separately, invest the age with its most signal literary distinction. The age of Elizabeth is as much in advance of that of Henry VIII. as this was of the fifteenth century. Tennyson has admirably characterised the special distinction of the Elizabethan age by a single epithet, "The spacious times of great Elizabeth." The world had grown wider everywhere, but most of all in England. England was better able than any other country to take advantage of the three great events which had so vastly expanded the intellectual horizon, the revival of classical literature, the publication of the Scriptures in the vernacular, and the discovery of the New World. The impulse communicated by the first of these was indeed common property, but Protestant countries alone could profit by the second, and no Protestant country but England and Holland could take advantage of the third. Had England not embraced the Reformation, she could have had no justification for those wars in the Low Countries and those expeditions to the Spanish Main which probably contributed more than anything else to kindle the national imagination to the point at which all enterprise, whether of a material or intellectual order, seems the fulfilment of manifest destiny. The extravagance of the inferior writers, no less than the grandeur of the higher, attests the prevalent temper of animation and excitement. The æther was ampler, the air diviner than of yore; the fields alike of action and of thought were indeed "invested with purpureal gleams."

*Special characteristics of the Elizabethan age*

The era of Elizabeth was thus one of those, of which human history counts some six or seven, in which the mind of man was suddenly expanded by being introduced to a more extensive area, whether through the operation of con-

*Its general picturesque-ness*

quest, as in the ages of Alexander the Great and the Crusades ; or of discoveries, as in that of Columbus ; or of new ideas, as in those of the Reformation and the French Revolution. Such periods must be favourable to literature and art, supposing the requisite conditions to exist, which is not always the case. In the Elizabethan age itself, for example, while the literary conditions were most favourable, interest in art languished, except as regarded music. With every allowance, it seems remarkable that the age should have achieved so little in fine art, domestic architecture excepted. So far from being

*par deſſus toutes choſes mon-  
daines affin que daignes me vi-  
ſiter ainſy que tu viſites tes plus  
loyaux amans*

*Maintenant .et ſouuent ie me 47  
deulx .et complains a cauſe des  
miſeres de ce monde .et les ſeuſ-  
ſre en grant douleur et angoiſſe*

*Car pluſieurs cas iournallemēt 48  
m'aduennent leſquelz ſouuen-  
teſois me troublent .m'apeſan-  
tiſſent et obfuſquent l'entēdemēt  
Ilz me reculent grandemēt .et 49*

**A page from Queen Elizabeth's Book of  
Private Prayers**

*From a MS. in the British Museum*

an unpicturesque generation, it was one of the most picturesque in English history, whether with regard to the characters of its leading personages, the incidents of their lives, the costumes in which they arrayed themselves, or the magnificence of shows and entertainments. This general picturesqueness communicated itself to the literature. The authors of the time are resplendent with glowing tints, and in this point of view resemble even the most picturesque of those among those of their successors who have not, like Byron and Shelley, led lives of adventure, as a picture resembles an engraving. It may justly be said that there is not one among the leading authors, statesmen, commanders, or voyagers of the age whom it is possible to represent in a mean or prosaic light. All the artistic feeling of the period seems to

have been absorbed into its daily life: the men do not make, but are pictures. The energy and undoubting self-confidence of the age are shown by the scale on which its works are undertaken. The plan of Spenser's *Faery Queene* is as much grander than Ariosto's as his *Gloriana*, the Virgin Queen, is higher than the house of Ferrara. Raleigh cannot get away from the same sovereign under twenty books ; and when seeking a subject for his pen in the Tower, nothing will serve him but the history of the world. Sidney found the voluminous *Arcadia* a pretty amusement for a summer. Marlowe condenses the morals of all miracle and mystery plays into one drama. No English writer, until the great revival after the French Revolution, has since shown an equal courage in venturing upon colossal themes, except Milton, and even he





Queen Elizabeth.

FROM AN ORIGINAL CRAYON DRAWING BY F. ZUCCERO, MADE IN LONDON IN 1575.

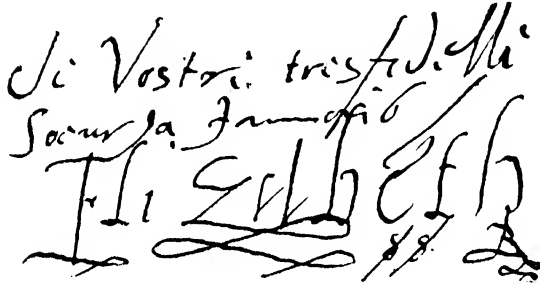


seems to have gauged the measure of his powers with more nicety than the Elizabethans ; he is nearer perfection, but wants their exuberance.

In the present chapter we have not to deal with Titans, but still with men of fair stature. The first person to be mentioned is QUEEN ELIZABETH herself, though her pen would scarcely have gained her a place in literary history if her sceptre had not made her the centre of the literary movement of her time. If she ever penned anything with the remotest view to publication it was the translations of Sallust and Boethius which she left in MS. She was admirably educated, a perfect mistress of Latin and French, as those foreign ambassadors knew at whose heads she would occasionally hurl scathing orations in these languages. She also spoke Italian and was not ignorant of Greek. But, with all her accomplishments, she was destitute of the taste for literature which her father and brother had possessed, and did little for the encouragement of learning or authorship in England. She kept her library up well, but chiefly by importations from abroad. She had no idea that the literary glories

Queen  
Elizabeth

of her reign rivalled the political, and no appreciation of the honour Spenser did her by making her the central figure of the *Faery Queene*. A writer not far from her time does indeed affirm that Shakespeare's plays "took" her; the tradition that *The Merry Wives*



Queen Elizabeth's Signature

From a MS. in the British Museum

*of Windsor* was written at her desire is not wholly discredited to credence ; one or two pieces of verse are dubiously attributed to her ; and Raleigh really seems to have thought that he could sing himself back into her good graces. In the main, however, the bent of her mind was entirely practical, and she appears to most advantage in her letters on affairs of state. Nothing, for example, could be better than this admonition of a past-mistress in statecraft to a neophyte, the King of Scots, that if he desires to retain her friendship he must take heed to his ways :

RIGHT DEAR BROTHER,—Your gladsome acceptance of my offered amity, together with the desire you seem to have engraven in your mind to make merits correspondent, makes me in full opinion that some enemies to our good will shall lose much travail, with making frustrate their baiting stratagems, which I know to be many, and by sundry means to be explored. I cannot halt with you so much as to deny that I have seen such evident shows of your contrarious dealings that if I made not my reckoning the better of the months, I might condemn you as unworthy of such as I mind to show myself toward you, and therefore I am well pleased to take any colour to defend your honour, and hope you will remember that who seeketh two strings to one bow, he may shoot strong, but never straight ; and if you suppose that princes' causes be veiled so covertly that no intelligence may bewray them, deceive not yourself ; we old foxes can find shifts to save ourselves

by others' malice, and come by knowledge of greatest secret, specially if it touch our freehold. It becometh therefore all our rank to deal sincerely, lest, if we use it not, when we do it, we be hardly believed. I write not this, my dear brother, for doubt but for remembrance. 1585.

*English History in the Elizabethan period*

One of the most remarkable phenomena in the history of British literature is the backwardness of the Britons in learning to write history. Scotland certainly produced a distinguished historian in the days of Elizabeth, but George Buchanan wrote in Latin, and the merit of Camden's *Annals* is largely due to their having been originally composed in that language. Many of the reflections in Raleigh's *History of the World* are worthy of any historian: but his narrative is undertaken on too large a scale to be much more than an imperfectly digested compilation. In the middle ages English historians had vied with the best of any nation; but now that the facilities for writing history were abundantly multiplied; now that Machiavelli and Guicciardini and Bembo in Italy, Barros in Portugal, and somewhat later the Spaniard Mariana and the Italian Davila, were producing perfect models of history from the literary point of view, England, with the signal exception of Bacon's *History of Henry the Seventh*, could show no admirable historical composition, originally written in the vernacular, until the time of Clarendon and Burnet, whose works, with all their excellences, partake largely of the nature of memoirs. And yet one of the earliest of English chroniclers after the invention of printing (most conveniently, however, considered here) but narrowly misses the character of an eminent historian.

**Edward Hall** (1498 ?–1547) was a lawyer and a man of superior education. He was attached to the Reformation, and made it his especial business to panegyrisé the house of Tudor in a history extending from the accession of Henry IV. to the death of Henry VIII., but only fully completed by the original author to 1532. The political tendency of his book is shown by the original title, *The Unyon of the Noble and Illustrious Famulies of Lancaster and York*. There is a remarkable diversity in his work according as he writes as an eye-witness or otherwise. The earlier part, where he merely follows other historians, is the best in point of composition, fluent, stately, and sonorous, though infected with an unusual number of Latin and French expressions. When writing of his own times he appears in comparison cramped and pedestrian, but shows an insight for which the former period of his history had afforded little scope; and he is an invaluable index to the public feeling of his day. Whether applied to the dignity of the former or to the sagacity of the latter portion of his work, Bishop Creighton's dictum that his merits have hitherto met with scanty recognition is entirely correct. With less partiality and more respect for the purity of English speech he might have been our first great historian. Shakespeare has made considerable use of him. His predecessor, **ROBERT FABYAN** (died 1513), deserves remembrance as the first who attempted to reduce the narratives of his predecessors into a general history, but he has neither Hall's style nor his judgment, and is chiefly valuable from the attention which his position as an alderman led him to devote to municipal matters. His chronicle was brought down by him to the death of Henry VII. and continued by anonymous writers.

The following passage is a fair example of Hall's style when he writes as an historian :

#### HENRY VI. AND QUEEN MARGARET.

King Henry which reigned at this time was a man of a meek spirit and of a simple wit, preferring peace before war, rest before business, honesty before profit, and quietness before labour. And to the intent that all men might perceive that there would be none more chaste, more meek, more holy, or a better creature : in him reigned steadfastness, modesty, integrity, and patience to be marvelled at, taking and suffering all losses, chances, displeasures, and such worldly torments in good heart and with a patient manner as though they had chanced by his own fault and negligent oversight ; yet he was governed by those whom he should have ruled, and bridled of such as he should sharply have spurred. He gaped not for honour, nor thirsted for riches, but studied only for the health of his soul, the saving whereof he esteemed to be the greatest wisdom, and the loss thereof the extremest folly that could be. But on the other part the Queen his wife was a woman of a great wit, and yet of no greater wit than of a hault stomach, desirous of glory, covetous of honour, and of reason, policy, counsel, and other gifts and talents belonging to a man, full and flowing ; of wit and williness she lacked nothing, nor of diligency itself and business she was not unexpert ; but yet she had one point of a very woman, for oftentime when she was fully bent on a matter she was like a weather-cock, mutable and turning. This was more perceiving that her husband did not frankly rule as he would, but did all things by the advice and counsel of Humphrey, Duke

of Gloucester, and that he pressed not much on the authority and governance of the realm, determined with herself to take upon her the rule and regiment both of the King and his kingdom, and to deprive and evict out of all authority the said Duke, then called the Lord Protector of the realm ; lest men should say and report that she had neither wit nor stomach which would permit and suffer her husband, being of perfect age and man's estate, like a young scholar or innocent pupil to be governed by the disposition of another man.

Hall's work was continued by RICHARD GRAFTON (*d.* 1572) and JOHN STOW (1525?–1605). Their labours as historians are not important, except for the curious documentary information which they have preserved, but Grafton was an eminent printer and publisher, who began to print the Great Bible at Paris in 1538, and completed it in England in the following year. He was for several years printer to the Crown, and lost his post for printing the procla-



John Stow

*From his monument in the Church of St. Andrew, Undershaft*

*The Chroniclers*

mations of Lady Jane Grey. Stow was, after Camden and Speed, the chief antiquary of his time, and his *Survey of London* (1598) is a work of the highest value. It is a curious proof of the esteem in which he was held that the poverty into which he fell in his latter years was mitigated by a special licence to beg.

Stow's *Survey* has made his name a household word. Another chronicler, *Holinshed* RAPHAEL HOLINSHED (*d.* 1580 ?), has obtained the same distinction on a ground which he never designed and could not foresee—the use made of his *Chronicle* by Shakespeare, who follows it closely throughout his historical plays, sometimes merely turning it into verse. It has thus become the basis of a true national epic, a destiny of which it gave few tokens when it left the author's hands, its *forte* being rather the mass of authorities adduced than dramatic liveliness or epic dignity. The literary execution is nevertheless commendable, and there is an invaluable repertory of official documents. In partly writing, partly superintending the work, Holinshed, whose early history and connections are unknown, was labouring to carry out the plan of his deceased employer, the printer Reginald Wolfe, who had designed an encyclopædic work on the history and geography of the world, contracted after his death to more modest proportions. Holinshed found business and literary coadjutors, and brought out the work in 1576, complete to the previous year. After his death the book was re-edited with a continuation to 1586 by John Vowell, uncle of Richard Hooker. The freedom of speech in both issues caused friction with the powers that were, and although the original text has been restored in modern editions, unmutilated copies of the original ones are very scarce.

*Harrison* Holinshed had a valuable coadjutor in WILLIAM HARRISON (1534–1593), an Essex clergyman, and after 1586 a canon of Windsor, whose *Description of England* precedes the *Chronicle*. The testimony of this highly trustworthy work to the general improvement in the education of the upper classes has already been quoted, and Harrison is equally instructive upon all the multifarious topics touched by him. We are indebted to him for a more comprehensive and accurate view of the general tendencies of the Elizabethan era than would otherwise have been possible, and his style is invariably lively and pleasant. He also turned Bellenden's translation of Hector Boece's Latin history of Scotland from Scottish speech into English, and left behind him a voluminous chronology and a treatise on weights and measures, which still exist in MS.

*John Foxe* It may be doubted whether JOHN FOXE, the Martyrologist (1516–1587), can, any more than the chroniclers, be properly reckoned among historians. As their works are merely annals, deficient in the polish and finish befitting history; so his is a collection of narratives, rather the material of history than history itself, yet almost a connected whole in virtue of unity of subject and the pervading spirit of the writer. No subject could be better adapted to call forth strength of feeling; and if *The Book of Martyrs* is grievously deficient in the calm moderation and impartiality essential to the accomplished

1577.

THE  
Firste volume of the  
*Chronicles of England, Scot-  
lande, and Irelande.*

CONTEYNING,

The description and Chronicles of England, from the  
first inhabiting into the conquest.  
The description and Chronicles of Scotland, from the  
first originall of the Scottes nation, till the yeare  
of our Reigne 1571.  
The description and Chronicles of Irelande, taken  
from the first originall of that Nation, until the  
yeare 1547.

Faithfully gathered and set forth, by  
Raphaell Holinshed.

AT LONDON,  
Imprinted for Iohn Harrison.

God saue the Queene.

historian, such dispassionate treatment is not to be expected from one upon whose garments is still the smell of fire.

Foxe might claim with Æneas to have himself been a portion of his record. The Reformation had no more convinced or stalwart champion. Born at Boston in 1516, distinguished in boyhood for a studious turn, and sent to Oxford by friends about 1532, he soon took his place among the members of the most advanced reforming party, and in 1545 resigned the fellowship



John Foxe

*After the portrait in the National Portrait Gallery*

which he had gained at Magdalen in 1539 on account of his indisposition to submit to celibacy, attend chapel regularly, or take orders. Five other fellows imitated his example. They were not, as frequently stated, expelled, but, according to the record in the college register, *ex honesta causa sponte recesserunt*. As so frequently the case since, the exile for conscience' sake found a refuge in private tutorship. He appears to have been for a time in the house of the Lucys at Charlecote, where he instructed the young man destined to be carried to fame upon the pinions of Shakespeare, and married Agnes Randall, a domestic or dependant. Coming to London to push his fortune, he is represented by a probably apocryphal biography, attributed to his son, to

have experienced great privations, but ultimately, in 1548, he gained the honourable post of tutor to the orphan children of the legally murdered Earl of Surrey, who had been executed in the previous year. Surrey's sister, the Duchess of Richmond, was a Protestant, and his father, as a prisoner in the Tower, was secluded from all control over his family. When released at the accession of Queen Mary, he immediately dismissed Foxe, who had, however, in the interval gained the affection of his pupils to such an extent that he continued to pay them clandestine visits, and their attachment was not dissolved even by the future Duke of Norfolk's participating in the unhappy conspiracy which brought him to the block in the days of Queen Elizabeth.



Foxe had meanwhile written several Protestant tracts in Latin and English, and received deacon's orders from Bishop Ridley, and shortly after Mary's accession found it advisable to withdraw to the Continent. He first abode at Strasburg, where he published in Latin the first book of his great work, chiefly devoted to the lives of Wycliffe and Huss. He removed to Frankfort, and after a while, finding his residence uncomfortable on account of the quarrels between the different parties among the Reformers, migrated to Basel, where he became a reader of the press in the office of the celebrated printer and publisher Oporinus. After producing an allegorical Latin drama, *Christus Triumphans*, and an appeal for toleration, addressed to the English Government, he set to work vigorously to complete his history of religious persecution. The portion dealing with England and Scotland, still in Latin, was published in 1559, under the title *Kerum in ecclesia gestarum, maximarumque per Europam persecutionum commentarii*. An account of the persecutions in other European countries was to have followed, but Foxe relinquished this part of the undertaking, and it was subsequently added by another hand.

For some time after his return, Foxe's chief care was the translation of his Latin history into English. *The Acts and Monuments*, as the vernacular version was entitled, was published on March 20, 1563, the same day as that on which the Latin continuation appeared at Basel. The book immediately gained celebrity, fame and authority under the popular title of *The Book of Martyrs*, yet no new edition was called for until 1570, when it received the imprimatur of the Church of England in the most unmistakable fashion by a resolution of Convocation that copies should be placed in cathedral churches and in the houses of the superior clergy. Foxe's private influence as an adviser upon religious matters became very great; beyond this he could not go, for although he had taken priest's orders, scruples as admirable in their disinterestedness as deplorable for their narrowness, kept him from accepting any other preferment than a prebend at Salisbury. The rest of his life was spent usefully and honourably over various literary and theological performances. He edited the Anglo-Saxon text of the Gospels and the regulations of the reformed Church of England, he preached against the Papal bull deposing Elizabeth, he vainly interceded on behalf of victims condemned to death for anabaptism. He died in April 1587, and was buried in St. Giles's, Cripple-gate, the church where Milton also is interred.

*The Book of Martyrs*, as it always will be called, is so thoroughly identified in the popular mind with the persecutions undergone by the Church of England in the reign of Mary that few are aware that its real title is *The Acts and Monuments*, that it professes to record all persecutions since the foundation of Christianity, and that of the eight volumes which it occupies in Canon Townsend's edition less than two treat of the persecutions of Protestants. The greater part of the work, consequently, can be little else than a compilation, and this character is unfortunately almost as applicable to the transactions of Foxe's own times as to the dim traditions of the ages of Decius and Diocletian. Foxe, having been a fugitive at the height of the Marian

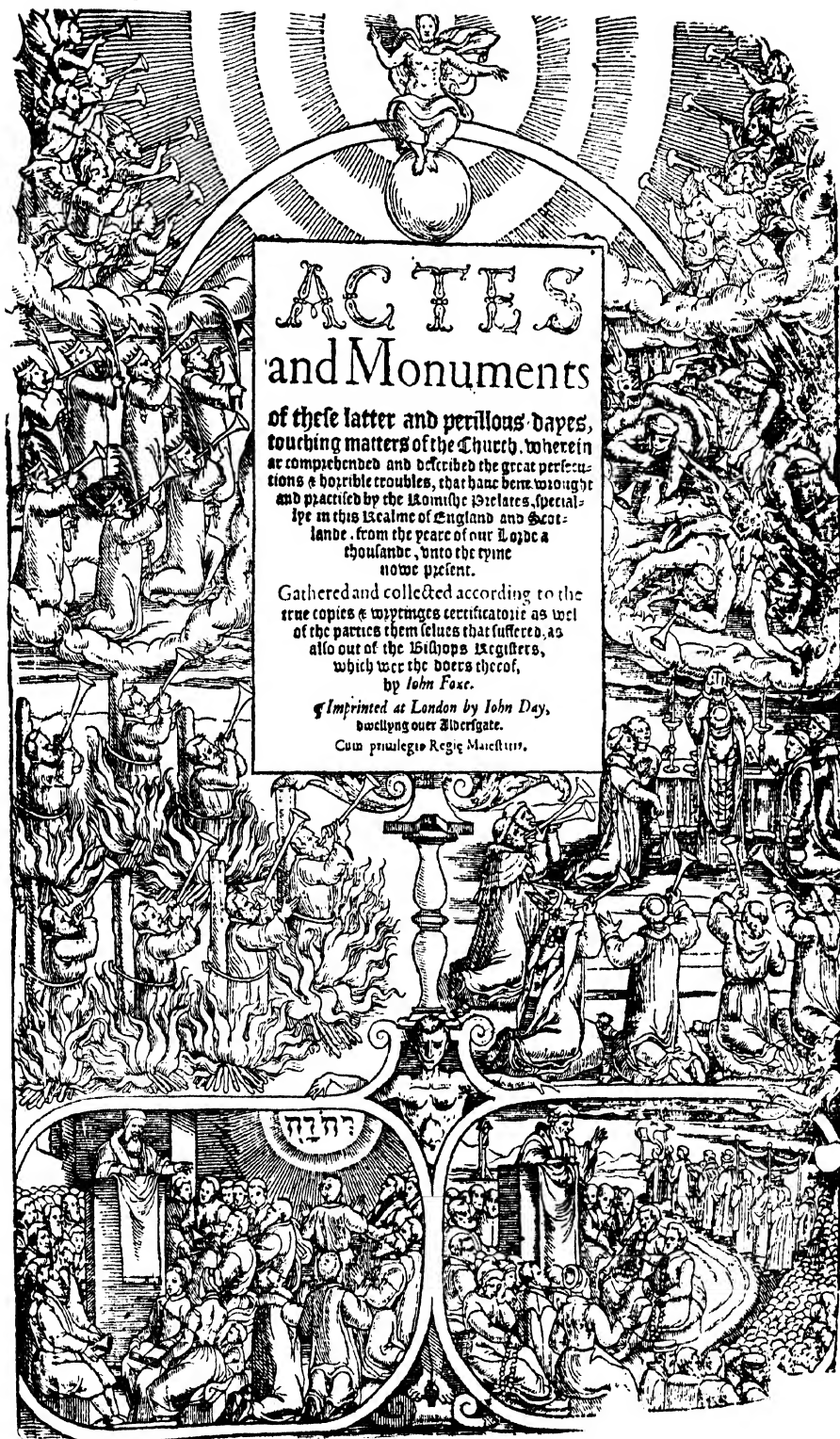
"*The Book of Martyrs*"

persecution, had no first-hand knowledge of the course of events, and was obliged to depend mainly upon the information transmitted to him from England. This was necessarily of unequal value, nor were the circumstances of the author himself such as to render him a nice or exacting critic of the materials submitted to him. He could not but write under the influence of intense indignation, and the more he found in his authorities to justify this feeling the better satisfied he was likely to be. This is but human nature; he could no more be expected to write with studious equity and balanced moderation than, as he said when defending himself from another charge, "to fine and mince my letters and comb my head and smooth myself all the day at the glass of Cicero." It is right to scrutinise his narratives in a critical spirit, but not to prefer charges of deliberate falsification against the narrator. With all its faults, *The Book of Martyrs* is the epic of the martyr age of the Church of England, the only such age that Church has known since the times of the Danes, whose atrocities fail to impress from the obscurity and imperfection of the record. The vexations suffered from the Puritans in the seventeenth century are far below the pitch of martyrdom, and were in a measure retaliatory: in the Marian persecution, and in that only, English archbishops, bishops, and priests were burned at the instance of a foreign Church. There or nowhere will the epic be found of a Church which has never known a catastrophe, though scarcely a generation has passed without her being proclaimed to be in danger. Foxe's vigour and pathos are not unworthy of his mission; his work has gained by the use which he has made of the simple narratives of homely men. The following are characteristic examples.

DR. ROWLAND TAYLOR.

After two days, the sheriff and his company led Dr. Taylor towards Hadley, and coming within two miles of Hadley he desired to light off his horse, which done, he leaped, and set a frisk or twain, as men commonly do in dancing. "Why, master doctor," quoth the sheriff, "how do you run?" He answered, "Well, God be praised, good master sheriff, never better: for now I know I am almost at home. I lack not past two stiles to go over, and I am even at my Father's house. But, master sheriff," said he, "shall we not go through Hadley?" "Yes," said the sheriff, "you shall go through Hadley." "Then," said he, "O good Lord! I thank thee, I shall yet once ere I die see my flock, whom thou, Lord, knowest I have most heartily loved, and truly taught. Good Lord! bless them, and keep them steadfast in thy word and truth."

When they were now come to Hadley, and came riding over the bridge, at the bridge-foot waited a poor man with five small children; who when he saw Dr. Taylor, he and his children fell down upon their knees, and held up their hands, and cried with a loud voice, and said, "O dear father and good shepherd Dr. Taylor, God help and succour thee, as thou has many a time succoured me and my poor children." Such witness had the servant of God of his virtuous and charitable alms given in his lifetime: for God would the poor should testify of his good deeds, to his singular comfort, to the example of others, and confusion of his persecutors and tyrannous adversaries. So the sheriff and others that led him to death were wonderfully astonished at this: and the sheriff sore rebuked the poor man for so crying. The streets of Hadley were beset on both sides the way with men and women of the town and country who waited to see him; whom when they beheld so led to death, with weeping



Title-page of Foxe's "Book of Martyrs," 1563

eyes and lamentable voices they cried, saying one to another, "Ah, good Lord! there goeth our good shepherd from us, who so faithfully hath taught us, so fatherly hath cared for us, and so godly hath governed us. O merciful God! what shall we poor scattered lambs do? What shall come of this most wicked world? Good Lord, strengthen him and comfort him," with such other most lamentable and piteous voices. Wherefore the people were sore rebuked by the sheriff and the catchpoles his men, that led him. And Dr. Taylor evermore

*The description of Smythfelde with the order and maner  
of certayne of the Councell, setting there at the  
burnyng of Anne Askew and Lancel with the others.*



The Burning of Anne Askew at Smithfield

*From "The Book of Martyrs"*

said to the people, "I have preached to you God's word and truth, and am come this day to seal it with my blood."

#### THE MARTYRDOM OF THOMAS HAUKES.

A little before his death, certain there were of his familiar acquaintance and friends, who frequented his company more familiarly, who seemed not a little to be confirmed both by the example of his constancy and by his talk; yet notwithstanding, the same again, being feared with the sharpness of the punishment which he was going to, privily desired that in the midst of the flames, he would show them, if he could, some token whereby they might be the more certain whether the pain of such burning were so great that a man might not therein keep his mind quiet and patient. Which thing he promised them to do, and so, secretly between them, it was agreed that if the rage of the pain were tolerable and might be suffered, then he should lift up his hands

above his head towards heaven before he gave up the ghost. Not long after, when the hour was come, Thomas Haukes was led away to the place appointed for the slaughter, by the Lord Riche and his assistants, who, being now come unto the stake, mildly and patiently addressed himself to the fire, having a strait chain cast about his middle, with no small multitude of people on every side compassing him about : unto whom after he had spoken many things, especially unto the Lord Riche, reasoning with him of the innocent blood of the saints ; at length after his fervent prayers first made and poured out unto God, the fire was set unto him. In the which when he continued long, and when his speech was taken away by violence of the flame, his skin also drawn together, and his fingers consumed with the fire, so that now all men thought certainly that he had been gone, suddenly, and contrary to all expectation, the blessed servant of God, being mindful of his promise afore made, reached up his hands burning on a light fire, which was marvellous to behold, over his head to the living God, and with great rejoicing, as it seemed, struck or clapped them three times together. At he sight whereof here followed such applause and outcry of the people, and especially of them which understood the matter, that the like hath not commonly been heard, and you would have thought heaven and earth to have come together. And so the blessed man, martyr of Christ, straightway sinking down in o the fire, gave up his spirit, A.D. 1555, June 10. And thus have you plainly and expressly described unto you the whole story as well of the life as of the death of Thomas Haukes, a most constant and faithful witness of Christ's holy gospel.

Besides its other claims to notice, Foxe's book is remarkable as, with the exception of Hooker's, the one theological work of the age which has a place in literature. In scarcely any other period of our history has religious controversy aroused more interest, or the proportion of theological publications been so considerable ; but the controversialists were too strictly professional, and sermons and devotional works fell below the level of literature. Bishop Jewel's *Apologia pro Ecclesia Anglicana* was indeed a great work, but as the gainsayers wrote in Latin, the apologist must imitate them, and the translation, by Lady Bacon, mother of the Chancellor, failed to obtain the classical position in English literature which the original had acquired in divinity. The theological unrest, nevertheless, was indirectly of great service to literature by the spirit of keen inquiry which it fostered and the patriotic scorn of Roman pretensions which inspires so much of our contemporary literature, and finds poetical expression in Shakespeare's *King John*. It has been well said that Pope Pius V.'s deposition of Elizabeth in 1570 signalises the liberation of the English mind in every department of the intellectual life. A very few years previously the ecclesiastical authorities had issued a thanksgiving for the relief of Malta, without a word to indicate consciousness of any difference between the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Churches of the Continent, but after Pius's ill-advised step, promptly followed by Babington's conspiracy and the St. Bartholomew, nothing of the kind is to be found. It could not be supposed, however, that the spirit of inquiry would be satisfied with the repudiation of Papal pretensions. Ere long, the conflict between Anglican and Puritan became still more lively, penetrating every university college, and producing shoals of Marprelate tracts and similar scurrilities, far below literary rank, yet not unimportant as preludes to the free newspaper press of later generations. The publication abroad

*Foxe and the  
Church of  
England*

of Roman Catholic writings, especially by Cardinal Allen and the Jesuit Parsons, contributed towards the same end. On the whole, however, the divines of the sixteenth century, except in zeal and erudition, rank below their successors of the next age. Archbishop MATTHEW PARKER (1504-1575) is, indeed, entitled to the highest praise as the munificent and enlightened patron of learning, the principal agent in the production of the Bishops' Bible, and the preserver of much Anglo-Saxon and other ancient literature; but his chief work, *De Antiquitate Ecclesiæ et Privilegiis Ecclesiæ Cantuariensis*, is in Latin. Nor were the departments of literature most nearly allied to theology fertile in eminent writers. RICHARD MULCASTER, successively headmaster of Merchant Taylors' and of St. Paul's (1530?-1611), was probably a better practical educationist than Roger Ascham, but ranks much lower as an author.

As a rule, an author whose works have been originally composed in Latin, and subsequently rendered into English, cannot claim to be accounted an English author, unless the translation has been made by himself. We have had, nevertheless, to recognise exceptions to this rule in Mandeville and Sir Thomas More, and a third and hardly less important one must be made in the person of WILLIAM CAMDEN, whose *Britannia* and *Annals*, though written in Latin, are so intensely English in spirit that the question of language becomes of minor importance. There is, moreover, reason to believe that the translation of the former by Philemon Holland, though not Camden's own, was made under his direction. It is, at all events, certain that Camden's work as a topographer was more important than that which had gained an honourable place in literature for his predecessor Leland; and that he was the first English historian of contemporary events who rose above the grade of a chronicler.

William  
Camden

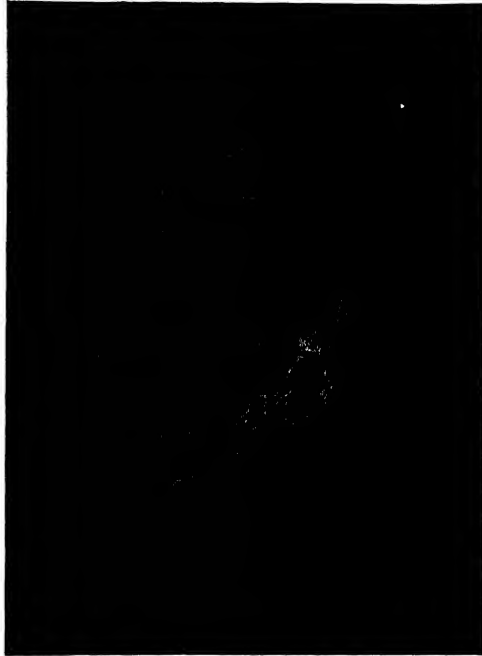
Camden's life was that of a schoolmaster and an antiquary. He was born in London on May 2, 1551; his father, a native of Lichfield, is described as a painter, but seems to have followed his profession rather as a trade than as an art. Camden was educated at Christ's Hospital and at St. Paul's School, and seems to have been helped through Oxford partly by friends, partly as a servitor or chorister at Magdalen College. He afterwards studied at Pembroke and Christ Church, but did not obtain a degree. Even then he showed a strong inclination to antiquarian pursuits, in which he was encouraged by a fellow student at Christ Church, Philip Sidney. After leaving the University he travelled much through the country, collecting antiquarian particulars, but his means of support seem obscure until, in 1575, he was appointed assistant-master at Westminster School. He became headmaster in 1593, but in 1597 retired upon being appointed Clarenceux King-of-Arms, which seems to have been considered the higher dignity, and was certainly more congenial to one who had spent all his holiday time in antiquarian journeys. He, nevertheless, distinguished himself as a schoolmaster by the production of a Greek grammar, which continued in use at Westminster for more than two centuries. The first edition of his *Britannia* had been published in 1586 the last published in his lifetime appeared in 1607. His other great work

the *Annals* of the reign of Elizabeth, was published down to 1589 in 1615; the second part, completing the book, did not appear till after the author's death. Both these great works were in Latin, but translations were speedily provided, and the former has had three, the standard version by Gough, with copious additions, appearing in 1789. Camden also collected the epitaphs in Westminster Abbey, edited Asser and other ancient historians, and performed much other antiquarian work. In personal character he was gentle, simple, and unworldly, and his industry was prodigious. In his latter years he resided principally at Chislehurst, where he died on November 9, 1623. He was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Of Camden's two chief works, the *Britannia* belongs to the class of monumental achievements which form great literary landmarks without being in themselves literature. Continuing the succession of Leland, it marks the definitive acceptance of antiquarianism as a branch of culture, while its own spirit is rather scientific than literary. The essence of literary grace is tasteful selection, but the topographer must be exhaustive. Pausanias probably provided but dry

reading for his own age: if it be otherwise now, it is from the consciousness that so much of what he saw can never be seen again. The piety of Pausanias was piety in the strictest sense of the term: Camden treads in the vestiges, not of the gods, but of the historians. "My first and principal design," he says, "was to trace out and rescue from obscurity those places which had been mentioned by Cæsar, Tacitus, Ptolemy, Antoninus Augustus, the *Notitiæ Provinciarum*, and other ancient writers." He also confined himself to the most illustrious families, thus incurring the displeasure of upstarts. Altogether, he left so much untold that his translator, Gough, spent seven years in rendering and supplementing him, and nine more in seeing him through the press. Gough's additions are frequently more interesting than the text, but want the charm of Camden's stately diction, a legacy from the original Latin.

It has rarely happened that a book of worth, not lost or grievously



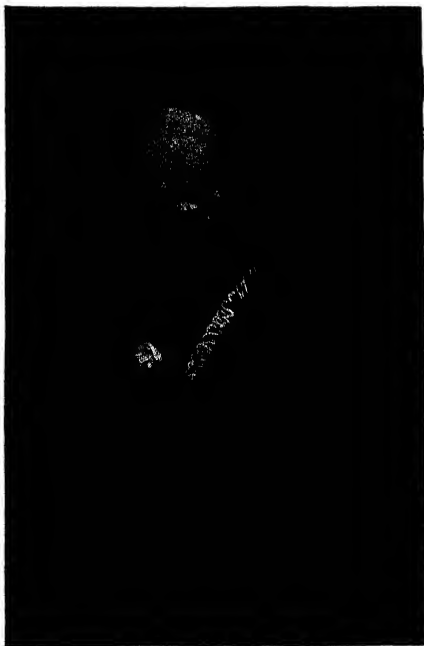
Camden's  
"Britannia"

William Camden

After the portrait by Mark Gheeraerts

Camden's  
"Annals"

mutilated, has failed of meet recognition from posterity. If there ever has been such a case, it has been that of Camden's second great work, the *Annals of Queen Elizabeth*. All circumstances might have seemed to conspire in its favour: the theme, which might confer the distinction of a national prose epic upon a book of less worth; the real merit of the execution; the very fact of its being a translation from the Latin, which brings the style nearer to that of our own day. England might have been thought the least likely of all nations to neglect a relation of one of the most glorious epochs of her



**John Speed**

*After the portrait in the National Portrait Gallery*

history; or at least, had the mutations of taste brought about a temporary eclipse, Camden might have been expected to have shared in the great Elizabethan revival of the nineteenth century. On the contrary, there has been no edition of the Latin original since 1717, or of either of the English translations since a still earlier period. Few Englishmen know that the patient antiquary produced a book worthy to rank with Shakespeare's historical plays and Hakluyt's records of voyages as a true prose epic. Merely considered as an historian, Camden is far above mediocrity; his work, but for the excessive space accorded to the trial and execution of Mary Stuart, is well proportioned, and shows acquaintance with the best models; few annalists have so successfully avoided the annalist's

habitual dryness. The merit, nevertheless, is rather moral than literary, consisting in the fine glow of patriotic feeling which throughout maintains the narrative at epical height, while the treatment of enemies is fair and courteous. The work has the inestimable advantage of being composed at a period neither too near to nor too remote from the transactions described; written under James, it is a retrospect taken when calm judgment had ceased to be obscured by contemporary passions. The execution is singularly even, there are few great passages, but there is the cumulative charm of the ceaseless and orderly procession of picturesque details, the glory of the times rather than of the author, whose skill is mainly conspicuous in the judicious marshalling of them, and in the skill with which Elizabeth, with more poetical than historical truth, is made throughout the dominant figure, the life and soul of every undertaking. One reason of the neglect of the work may be its character as a translation, although its adoption into the national literature proves



that a foreign origin need be no insuperable bar. The existing versions, one of which is made from the French, are respectable rather than brilliant; a new translation, conformable to the best modern standard, would be an undertaking worthy of a scholar and a patriot. The following extracts are fair examples of Camden's style, as he appears in his translator Norton :

#### THE TAKING OF CALAIS BY THE SPANIARDS.

In the midst of these tumults of Ireland, Albert, Archduke of Austria and Cardinal, whom the Spaniard had made Governor of the Netherlands, suddenly withdrew the Queen's mind from Irish matters. For as soon as he had taken upon him the government, he gathered together the Spaniards' forces as if he proposed to raise the siege at La Fere, a town of Picardy, and beyond the opinion of all men turned aside to Calais and besieged it, and having the first day taken the castle of Newenham, became master of the haven. As soon as the Queen heard by the fearful messenger of the French king that Calais was besieged, she commanded a power of men to be gathered, that very day being Sunday, while men were at divine service, to aid the French king, and in that provide for the safety of England. For she could not but suspect that England might be burned with the fire in her neighbour's country. This army hastily raised she committed to Essex. But before they were shipped, she had certain advertisement that both the town and the castle were yielded up into the Spaniards' hands, for when with the mutual thundering of the ordnance, the report of which was heard as far as Greenwich, the



Sir Thomas Bodley

Archduke Albert had shaken the walls, the townsmen withdrew themselves to the castle, which within few days also was easily taken with great slaughter of the French. Hereupon was the English army presently discharged, and some money lent unto the French king, the Dukes of Bouillon and Sancy passing their words for the same.

#### CHARACTER OF BURGHLEY.

When she was Queen, he was made a privy counsellor and secretary : and after the decease of Sir Thomas Parry she gave him the office of Master of the Wards in the third year of her reign. Which place he executed, as he did all his other, providently for the benefit of his prince and the wards, for his own profit moderately, and for the benefit of his own followers bountifully, yet without offence, and in all things with great commendation for his integrity, insomuch that the Queen admiring his wisdom committed in a manner the managing of the whole state unto him. His prudence and fidelity in the weightiest businesses having been approved the space of full thirteen years, the Queen honoured him with the title of Baron of Burghley, and then made him Lord High Treasurer of England. In which office, detesting to scrape money together by bad practices,

he increased, as his private estate, so also the public treasure, by his industry and parsimony. For he hardly suffered anything to be expended for the Queen's Majesty's honour and the defence of the realm, or the relieving of our neighbours. He looked strictly, yet not roughly, to the farmers of the customs. He never liked, as he was wont to say, that the treasury should grow as the spleen, and the rest of the members languish, and herein he happily bent his best endeavours that both prince and people might grow rich together, saying oftentimes that nothing is profitable to a prince which is not joined with honour. Wherefore he would have no rents raised upon lands, nor old farmers and tenants put out. Which also he observed in his own private estate, which he managed with that integrity that he never sued any man, and no man ever sued him. But I will not go too far in his praises, yet may I say truly that he was in the number of those few who have both lived and died with glory.

*Other Anti-  
quaries*

In the realms of antiquarianism Camden had in his day no competitor,



Sir Robert Cotton

*From a print after the portrait by Paul van Somer*

but he did not stand alone. The painstaking Stow has already been mentioned along with the chroniclers, and his archæology was better than his history. JOHN SPEED (1552?–1629) raised antiquarianism more nearly to the dignity of history, and, having anticipated Camden's *Annals* by four years by the publication of *The History of Great Britain* in 1611, has some claim to rank as the first English historian. He also had great merit as a cartographer. Sir THOMAS BODLEY and Sir ROBERT BRUCE COTTON, though not eminent as writers, immortalised their names as benefactors to learning. The great scientific glories of their country in this age, WILLIAM GILBERT, the discoverer

of magnetism, and WILLIAM HARVEY, the discoverer of the circulation of the blood, wrote entirely in Latin.

It has been already remarked that the first standard histories produced in England partake largely of the nature of memoirs. The same is true of one of the two chief contributions to Scottish history produced in the reign of Elizabeth, both works never to be forgotten, but only in one instance claiming a place in British literature. "Charm" is not a term frequently applicable to iconoclastic JOHN KNOX (1505–1572), but it is fully merited by the autobiographic portion of his *History of the Reformation in Scotland*. In general this celebrated book cannot be other than a party manifesto, and few such manifestoes have been more virulent and abusive. It is not on that account to be deemed unveracious. It bears throughout the impress of

*John Knox*

entire conviction ; its vivid portraits of the author's adversaries no less than of his friends bear every internal evidence of accuracy ; and, without effort or conscious intention, the author is especially successful in painting himself to the life. His celebrated account of his discourse to Mary, Queen of Scots, for example, depicts the man who united the statesman to the prophet, a John the Baptist who would have been a match for Herod and Herodias together, and in whom the iron rigour of a Calvin was tempered by something of the geniality of a Luther :

The Queen looked about to some of the reporters, and said, " Your words are sharp enough as you have spoken them, but yet they were told to me in another manner. I know that my uncles and you are not of one religion, and therefore I cannot blame you albei you have no good opinion of them. But if you hear anything of myself that mislikes you, come to myself and tell me, and I shall hear you."

" Madam," quoth he, " I am assured that your uncles are enemies to God and unto his son Jesus Christ, and that for maintenance of their own pomp and worldly glory they spare not to spill the blood of many innocents ; and therefore I am assured that their enterprises shall have no better success than others

have had that before them have done that they do now. But as to your own personage, Madam, I would be glad to do all that I could to your Grace's contentment, provided that I exceed not the bounds of my vocation. I am called, Madam, to a public function within the Kirk of God, and am appointed by God to rebuke the sins and vices of all. I am not appointed to come to every man in particular to show him his offence ; for that labour were infinite. If your Grace please to frequent the public sermons, then doubt I not but you shall fully understand both what I like and mislike, as well in your Majesty as in all others. Or if your Grace will assign unto me a certain day and hour when it will please you to hear the form and substance of doctrine which is propounded in public to the churches of this realm, I will most gladly await upon your Grace's pleasure, time, and place. But to wait upon your chamber-door, or elsewhere, and then to have no further liberty but to whisper my mind into your Grace's ear, or to tell to you what others think and speak of you, neither will my conscience nor the vocation whereto God hath called me suffer it. For albeit at your Grace's



John Knox

*After the portrait in the National Portrait Gallery*

commandment I am here now, yet cannot I tell what other men shall judge of me. that at this time of day am absent from my book and waiting upon the Court."

"You will not always," said she, "be at your book," and so turned her back. And the said John Knox departed with a reasonable merry countenance, whereat some Papists offended said, "He is not affrayed." Which heard of him, he answered, "Why should the pleasing face of a gentle woman affray me? I have looked into the faces of many angry men, and yet have not been affrayed above measure." And so he left the Queen and the Court for that time.

*George  
Buchanan*

The influence of GEORGE BUCHANAN (1506-1582) upon his country was only second to that of Knox: as her national historian, ablest political writer, and chief representative of the humanities. In every circumstance of his life he is interesting; most so, perhaps, as the antagonist of the divine right of kings while directing the education of the future King of Great Britain



**George Buchanan**

*From an old engraving*

and Ireland. His honourable poverty leaves no doubt of the sincerity of his convictions; whether he did or did not promote good ends by wicked means is a problem no nearer solution than when it was first broached. Had he written his *History* and his *De Jure Regni* in the Scotch vernacular he might have given this racy dialect permanent rank as a literary language; but he was too proud of his consummate Latin, and, perhaps, judged wisely in resolving not to forfeit his fame and influence upon the Continent. Take him altogether, in his scholarship, his wanderings, his perils from the Inquisition, his free thought in politics and, perhaps, in religion, his studious life


and loose verses, he is as perfect a type of the Renaissance man of letters as the Renaissance can show.

*Other  
Scottish  
historians*

Contemporaneously with Buchanan, Scotland had a delightful gossiping chronicler in ROBERT LYNDESAY of Pitcottie; a fair historian of modern times in Bishop JOHN LESLIE of Ross; and a lively memoir-writer in Sir JOHN MELVILLE, gentleman of the chamber to Mary Stuart, whose graphic account of Queen Elizabeth's inquisitiveness about his mistress is familiar to most readers.

*Richard  
Hakluyt*

Few writers of the age of Elizabeth have left a more enviable reputation than one who, though endowed with a fine style and a weighty cast of thought, wrote little, but edited much. The life of RICHARD HAKLUYT (1552? -1616) was consecrated to two purposes equally patriotic: that of preserving the memory of his countrymen's exploits in fields of travel and adventure, and of indicating further means for the promotion of the wealth and commerce of the nation. These he sought to promote by collecting and printing the unpublished narratives of English explorers of all parts of the world, adding translations by himself and others of the relations of foreign voyagers where



THE

# PRINCIPAL NAVI- GATIONS, VOIAGES, TRAFFIQUES AND DISCO- ueries of the English Nation, made by Sea

or ouer-land, to the remote and farthest di-  
stant quarters of the Earth, at any time within  
the compasse of these 1500. yeeres: Deuided  
into three seuerall Volumes, according to the  
positions of the Regions, whereunto  
they were directed.

This first Volume containing the woorthy Discoueries,  
&c. of the English toward the North and Northeast by sea,  
as of *Lapland, Scrikfinia, Corelia*, the Baie of *S. Nicolas*, the Isles of *Col-  
goicue, Vaigatz*, and *Noua Zembla*, toward the great river *Ob*,  
with the mighty Empire of *Russia*, the *Caspian* sea, *Geor-  
gia, Armenia, Media, Persia, Boghar* in *Bactria*,  
and diuers kingdoms of *Tartaria*:

Together with many notable monuments and testimo-  
nies of the ancient forren trades, and of the warrelike and  
other shipping of this realme of *England* in former ages.

*Whereunto is annexed also a briefe Commentarie of the true  
state of Island*, and of the Northren Seas and  
lands situate that way.

*And lastly, the memorable defeate of the Spanish huge  
Armada, Anno 1588. and the famous victorie  
atchieued at the citie of Cadiz, 1596.  
are described.*

By *RICHARD HAKLVT* Master of  
Artes, and sometime Student of Christi-  
Church in Oxford.



Imprinted at London by *GEORGE  
BISHOP, RALPH NEWBERIE  
and ROBERT BARKER.*  
1598

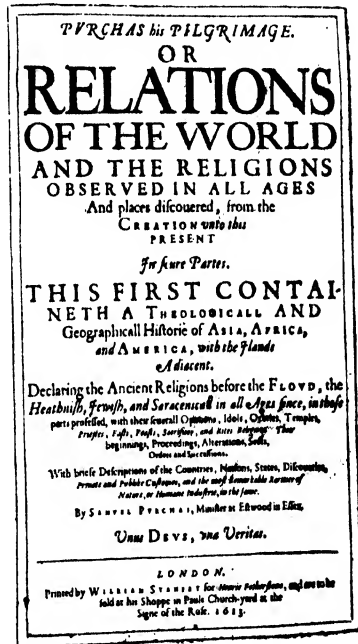
these appeared to his purpose. He took up this idea at Oxford, whither he proceeded from Westminster School in 1570, reading eagerly "whatever printed or written discoveries and voyages I find extant, either in Greek, Latin, Italian, Spanish, Portugal, French, or English languages." Entering the Church he obtained a prebend at Westminster and other preferment, but nothing diverted him from the main purpose of his life. After translating French accounts of voyages to Florida and editing Peter Martyr, he published in 1589 his *Principal Navigations, Voyages, and Discoveries of the English Nation*: a collection enlarged to three volumes in the edition of 1598-1600. The first volume contains voyages to the northern regions, Russia and Tartary; the second, voyages to India and the East in general; the third, which is considerably the largest, voyages to the New World. The collection begins somewhat inauspiciously with a grave notice of King Arthur's expedition against Iceland, A.D. 517, but, this little tribute to Myth discharged, we find ourselves traversing Tartary with the no less authentic than picturesque Carpini, and the book is henceforth a treasury of delight, be the narrators English or foreign. The former, nevertheless, so greatly preponderate that no English book after Shakespeare's historical plays better deserves the character of a national epic, and, notwithstanding the diversity of style, similarity of subject and community of spirit supply the needful unity. It has always exerted, and in the more popular edition recently announced must exert still more signally, the happiest influence upon the national character. Besides this great end, Hakluyt aimed at organising discovery under a central authority, resembling the Spanish *Casa* at Seville; but such methodical control was too alien to the English genius to be carried into effect. He continued to interest himself in mercantile and colonising enterprises, advising the directors of the East India Company, largely concerned in the settlement of Virginia, and translating De Soto's travels in that country. He died in 1616, and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Hakluyt is so excellent a writer that it is to be wished he had written more. The following is from a letter to Raleigh, dated May 1, 1587, encouraging him to persevere in his Virginian enterprise, and indulging in over-sanguine anticipations of the liberality of good Queen Bess:

Moreover there is none other likelihood but that her Majesty, which hath christened and given the name to your Virginia, if need require, will deal after the manner of honourable godmothers, which, seeing their gossips not fully able to bring up their children themselves, are wont to contribute to their honest education, the rather if they find any towardliness or reasonable hope of goodness in them. And if Elizabeth, Queen of Castile and Aragon, after her husband Ferdinand and she had emptied their coffers and exhausted their treasures in subduing the Kingdom of Granada and rooting the Moors, a wicked weed, out of Spain, was nevertheless so zealous of God's honour that (as Fernando Columbus, the son of Christopher Columbus, recordeth in the history of the deeds of his father), she laid part of her own jewels, which she had in great account, to gage, to furnish his father food upon his first voyage, before any foot of land of all the West Indies was discovered, what may we expect of our most magnificent and gracious prince Elizabeth of England, into whose lap the Lord hath most plentifully thrown his treasures; what may we, I say, hope

of her forwardness and bounty in advancing of this your most honourable enterprise, being far more certain than that of Columbus, and tending no less to the glory of God than that action of the Spaniards? A wise philosopher noting the sundry desires of divers men writeth, that if an ox be put into a meadow he will seek to fill his belly with grass, if a stork be cast in she will seek for snakes, if you turn in a hound he will seek to start a hare: so sundry men entering into these discoveries propose to themselves several ends. Some seek authority and places of commandment; others experience, by seeing of the world, the most part worldly and transitory gain, and that oftentimes by dishonest and unlawful means, the fewer number the glory of God and the saving of the souls of the poor and blinded infidels. Yet because divers honest and well-disposed persons are entered already into this your business, and that I know you mean hereafter to send some such good Churchmen thither as may truly say with the Apostle, to the savages, We seek not yours but you, I conceive great comfort of the success of this your action, hoping that the Lord, whose power is wont to be perfected in weakness, will bless the foundations of this your building. Only be you of a valiant courage and faint not, as the Lord said unto Joshua, exhorting him to proceed on forward in the conquest of the land of promise, and remember that private men have happily wielded and waded through as great enterprises as this, with lesser means than those which God in his mercy hath bountifully bestowed upon you to the singular good, as I assure myself of this our Commonwealth wherein you live.

The mantle of Hakluyt can hardly be said to have fallen upon SAMUEL PURCHAS (1575?–1626), even though he became possessed of many of Hakluyt's manuscripts, continued his labours, and was, like Hakluyt, an Essex, afterwards a London, clergyman. But the abstracts he made of voyages, when they can be compared with the originals, seem meagre; and, when they cannot, he labours under the imputation of having suffered his materials to be lost. As, however, he died only a year after the publication of his collection, it may be reasonable as well as charitable to ascribe their disappearance to the negligence of his heirs. *Purchas his Pilgrimage* was published in 1613, in four volumes, and, with all its defects, there is magic in the sound. Though far inferior in interest and literary merit to Hakluyt, it has preserved much that might have perished without it, and has laid English poetry under a great obligation by inspiring Coleridge with his *Kubla Khan*. The first line of this magical fragment is taken literally from Purchas, only altering "Xamdu" into "Xanadu," *metri gratia*; and the verbal resemblance for several lines is sufficiently close to arouse scepticism of the alleged origination of the poem from a trance. "Alph the sacred river," however, does not run in Purchas, nor is the dulcimer of the Abyssinian maid audible in him.



Title-page of "Purchas his Pilgrimage" 1613

"Purchas his Pilgrimage"

*Knolles and  
Rycaut*

The spirit of RICHARD KNOLLES (1550 ? -1610), the historian of the Turks, is so sympathetic with that of Hakluyt and Purchas, that he is, perhaps, better mentioned along with them than with historians. He translates and adapts, with no pretension to original research, but with the zest of a voyager or a romancer. Having distinguished himself at Oxford, he was brought by a patron to Sandwich as headmaster of the grammar-school, and filled the post until his death. His spirited style has earned him high,

perhaps exaggerated, praise from Johnson, Southey, and Byron, and some strokes in Shelley's sublime vision of the storming of Constantinople in his *Hellas* seem to indicate that Knolles's description was not unknown to him. Knolles's history was in 1680 continued to 1677 by Sir PAUL RYCAUT (1628-1700), a man qualified by long diplomatic experience in the country, who also accompanied it with a valuable commentary in his *Present State of Turkey* (1668).

An age in which both the objects of knowledge and the facilities for its acquisition had so greatly multiplied as the Elizabethan was certain to abound in technical treatises. Excellent books for the time, original and



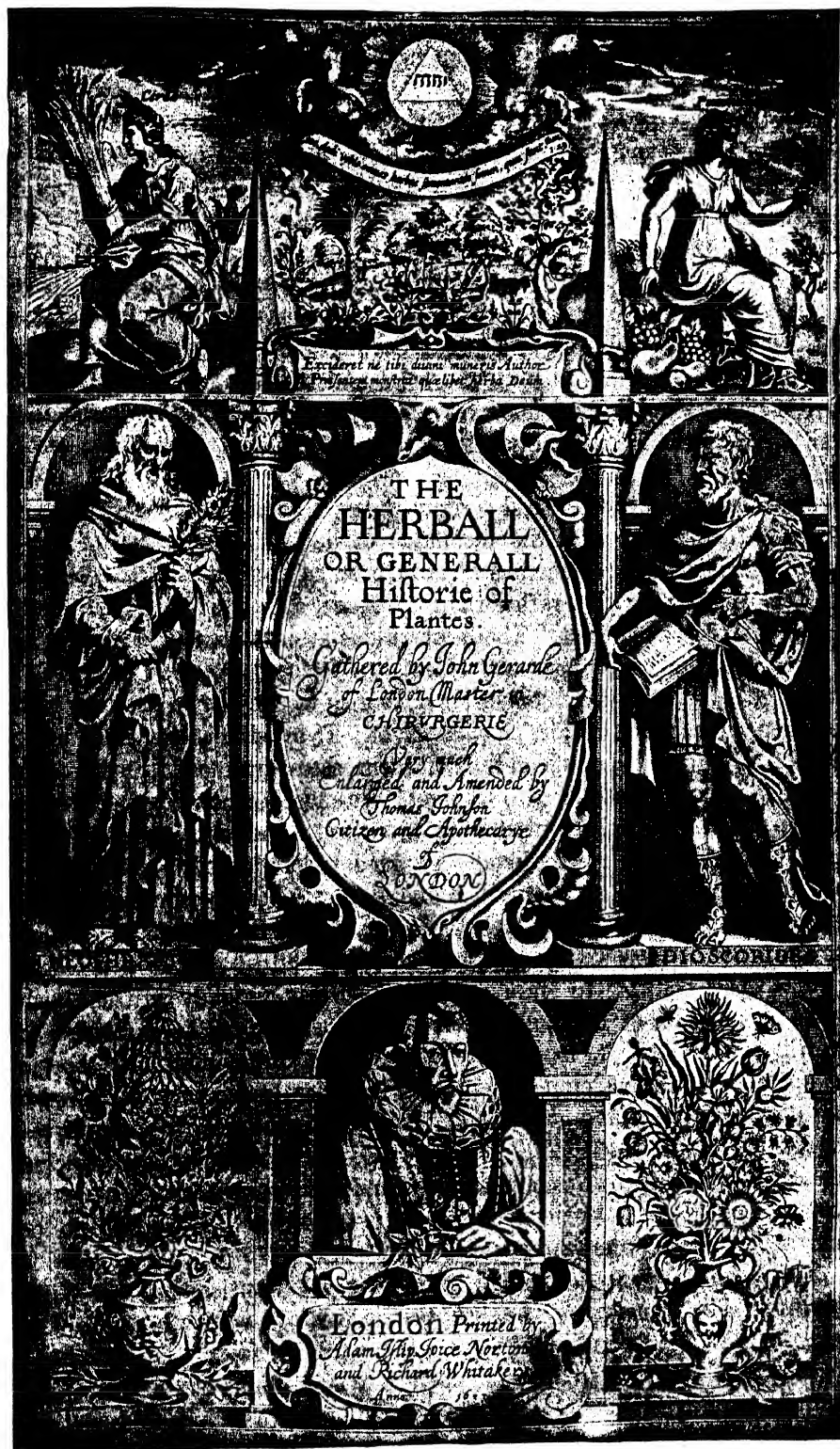
John Gerard

*After the portrait in the National Portrait Gallery*

*Gerard's  
Herbal*

translated, were produced on medicine, agriculture, music, mathematics, map-making, horsemanship, fencing, and the military art; but few of them can be deemed entitled to a place in literature. An exception may be made in behalf of one of especial celebrity, the *Herbal* of JOHN GERARD (1545-1612). Gerard, a native of Cheshire, member, and ultimately Master, of the Company of Barber Surgeons, made and published (1596) a catalogue of the plants in his own garden in Holborn, the first instance on record. He was then Superintendent of the gardens of Lord Burghley, to whom he dedicated his *Herbal*, published in the following year. It is in the main a translation of the *Pemptades* of Dodoens, begun by another hand, and nearly all the eighteen hundred woodcuts are imported from Germany. Gerard's additions, nevertheless, are valuable, and no subsequent





Title-page of Gerard's "Herbal" 1633

herbalist has disputed his pre-eminence, unless from the point of view of medicine.

Reginald  
Scot

Another technical writer, having like Gerard given his country the first work she possessed on an important subject, gained an honourable place in literature by labour of quite another kind. REGINALD SCOT (1538?–1599), in spite of his name not a Scotchman but a Kentishman, laudably interested in the staple product of his county, published in 1574 the first practical treatise on the cultivation of hops. Ten years afterwards he produced his *Discovery of Witchcraft*, a sagacious and courageous, but for long an ineffectual, exposure of the baleful superstition which had destroyed so many innocent victims. Few books of the time do both the head and the heart of the writer more real honour. King James, upon his accession, ordered it to be burned, but, from allusions in *Macbeth*, Shakespeare seems to have taken the liberty to keep a copy.

Puttenham's  
"Art of  
English  
Poetry"

Another group of technical writers deserve fuller treatment, those who occupied themselves with the technique of literary composition. The one man of genius among them has already been noticed, but Sidney's *Defence of Poetry* is an inspiration rather than a treatise, an example of poetry rather than a disquisition upon it. The most serious attempt at a critical judgment of poetry is the anonymous *Art of English Poetry*, published in 1589, and attributed on by no means conclusive authority to one of two brothers named PUTTENHAM, nephews of Sir Thomas Elyot. If by either, the elder brother, Richard, who travelled much on the Continent, seems the more likely candidate, though it is usually ascribed to George. We must acknowledge grave doubt whether it can be rightly attributed to either. Both appear to have been troublesome characters, continually engaged in broils and contentions, and unlikely to have held such an office about the Queen's person as the author of the treatise is stated to have enjoyed. Richard Puttenham had been banished for many years for a serious offence; and George, in a vindication of Elizabeth's conduct to Mary Stuart, which was certainly written by him, makes no mention of holding any office at Court; nor is such alluded to in the will of either of the brothers. Whoever the author may have been, the treatise possesses considerable merit, and is evidently the work of a well-bred man of wide reading and good taste. It is divided into three books, treating respectively of the essential character of poetry, its "proportion," including metrical law, and the ornaments of trope and figure of speech. The passages most attractive to the modern reader are its allusions to early English poets and its stores of contemporary anecdote.

Other  
critical  
treatises

*The Art of English Poetry* had been three years anticipated by WILLIAM WEBBE in his *Discourse of English Poetrie*, written when the author, who seems to have been born about 1552, was a tutor in Essex. His work is not, like *The Art*, a formal treatise on poetical composition, but a review of the condition of English poetry at his time mainly in its technical aspect, comprising, nevertheless, interesting allusions to living authors, and manifesting a creditable appreciation of the worth of Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar*.

Without altogether condemning rhyme, Webbe thinks that the condition of English poetry would be more satisfactory if the classical metres had been naturalised from the first, and appends versions of two of Virgil's eclogues by himself as specimens, as well as a transposition of one of Spenser's lyrics into sapphics. The force of pedantry could no further go, and yet, when off his hobby, Webbe is a judicious writer. He was greatly influenced by GABRIEL HARVEY (1545?–1630), long a prominent figure at Cambridge, a personage of such great authority and so little taste that he actually persuaded the inventor of the Spenserian stanza to write for a time in hexameters and pentameters. He was unquestionably a man of much ability, but is now chiefly remembered by his familiar letters and his acrimonious controversies with Greene and Nash, terminated by the decree that "all Nash's books and Dr. Harvey's books be taken wheresoever they may be found, and that none of the same books be ever printed hereafter." FRANCIS MERES (1565–1647), clergyman and schoolmaster, added to his compilation of choice sentences, *Palladis Tamia* (1598), "a comparative discourse of our English poets with the Greek, Latin, and Italian," which has laid posterity under everlasting obligation by its notice of Shakespeare and Marlowe. The attacks on the stage made by STEPHEN GOSSON (1565–1624) are only noteworthy as having called forth Sidney's *Apology* and Lodge's *Defence*, and as illustrating Disraeli's apophthegm concerning critics, for Gosson had been an unsuccessful author and dramatist before becoming a clergyman.

Among the most remarkable phenomena of literature must be reckoned the slow development of pure fiction in all nations. In the days of Elizabeth, English novelists were still very much at the point reached in the third and fourth Christian centuries by the Greek erotic romancers: their notion of a novel was still that of a love tale crowded with improbable adventures, and setting history and geography at defiance. The vast possibilities of the social novel with a purpose had as yet dawned upon no one, and perhaps could hardly be expected to do so while the field was efficiently occupied by comedy. More's *Utopia* was perhaps as yet the only example of didactic prose fiction, although the romantic tale had long before been naturalised in verse by Gower, and romances of knight-errantry, transplanted from the domain of poetry, were greatly in vogue. Another kind of fiction which

*The Novel  
in England*

## THE ARTE OF ENGLISH POESIE.

Contrived into three Bookes: The first of Poets  
and Poetrie, the second of Proportion,  
the third of Ornament.



AT LONDON  
Printed by Richard Field, dwelling in the  
black-Friers, neere Ludgate.  
1589.

Title-page of Puttenham's "Arte of  
English Poesie"

had arisen in Italy, the short story exhibiting manners and sometimes ridiculing follies or vices, had found its way into English literature through Chaucer, and was about to influence the drama by supplying playwrights with plots, but had rarely effected an entrance into prose literature until, in 1566, sixty translated novelettes were published under the title of *The Palace of Pleasure* by WILLIAM PAINTER (1540?–1594), clerk of the ordnance in the Tower of London. Subsequent continuations brought the number up to one hundred and one. In one portion of his work Painter may be regarded as a sort of prose Gower, about thirty of his stories being taken from the classics. The larger and more important portion, however, come from modern Italian or French writers, especially from Bandello, who contributes no fewer than twenty-six. Boccaccio and Queen Margaret of Navarre are also liberally represented. The work became a great storehouse of plots for dramatists, and in this point of view exerted much influence, but it did not encourage Englishmen to the composition of original fiction on the scale of the Italian short story. The numerous imitations to which its success gave rise, by Sir GEOFFREY FENTON (1567), GEORGE PETTIE (1576), GEORGE TURBERVILLE (1587), and GEORGE WHETSTONE (1582), are all made up of translations. Turberville and Whetstone will claim notice among poets and dramatists respectively, and Pettie's *Petite Palace of Pettie his Pleasure* is noteworthy as an anticipation of the euphuistic style of Lyly. Painter produced nothing original. Before obtaining his appointment at the Ordnance he had been a clergyman and a schoolmaster. He grew rich in office, and did not escape charges of malversation, but retained his post.

*John Lyly*

Not many writers of the period, till nearly the end of the sixteenth century, exercised a greater influence over cultivated literary taste than JOHN LYLY, "the Euphuist," one of the first examples of an English author attracting attention simultaneously in fiction, poetry, and drama. He was born, probably in 1554, either at Maidstone or at Boxley in Kent; studied at Oxford, where he obtained more reputation as a wit than as a scholar, and about 1575 came to Court in search of a place. The first part of his *Euphues, the Anatomy of Wit*, appeared in 1579, and at once made him celebrated. *Euphues and his England* was published in 1580. Soon afterwards he began to write for the children trained as choristers in the Savoy Chapel and St. Paul's Cathedral that series of plays for which he is at the present day chiefly indebted for his literary distinction and celebrity, though not for his significance in the history of culture. This is entirely grounded upon his "euphuism," which tinged the style of many writers of the day, and is ridiculed by, or perhaps we should rather say good-naturedly quizzed by, Shakespeare in *Love's Labour's Lost* and *The Winter's Tale*. It is probably best known to the modern reader by the exaggerated parody of Sir Walter Scott in *The Monastery*. In fact, no age will ever be free from euphuism, which may be defined as the endeavour to gain attention for ordinary matter by extraordinary manner. This perfectly succeeded with Lyly, who, though a forcible writer on occasion, would never have impressed the age

as he did if his style had been unambitious. Neither, it may be said, would Carlyle; but Carlyle's style was natural to him, and suited the complexion of his thought; Lyly affected one which, except for the immediate reputation which it gained him, he had better have been without. It has been ascribed to the influence of the Spaniard Guevara, as translated by Sir Thomas North, and there is sufficient internal evidence of Lyly's careful study of Guevara's

for y<sup>e</sup> I am for some few daies going into the Countie, yf y<sup>e</sup> L. be not at home  
to ~~comfite~~ aduise me to y<sup>e</sup> place, at my returne I will give my most  
dutifull attendance, at wch time, it may be my honesty may require y<sup>e</sup> L.  
wisdom and best prouident, to geue me that, which shall allow. In the meane season I will  
take good care to be attended, yf I be not comfited to my L. and so remaine to be.  
during his pleasure, I desire but y<sup>e</sup> L. secret opinion, for as  
my L. be most benigne, so I desire good in time he be not also  
that I am to be a p<sup>ro</sup>priet, and to be a nurse I booke.  
most dutifull to command

thus he

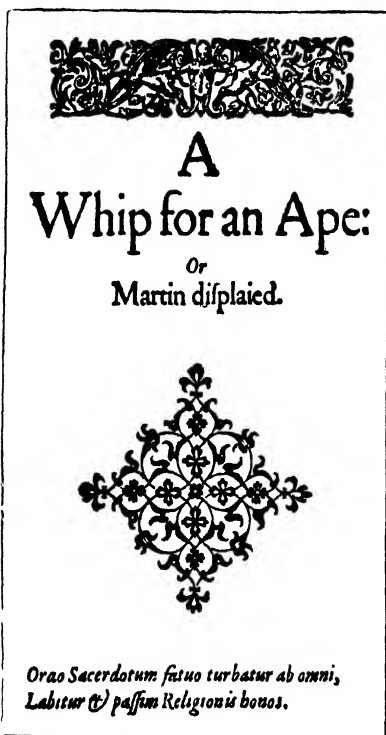
Facsimile letter from John Lyly to Lord Burghley

British Museum Lansdowne MS. 36

*Dial of Princes*, but it has in fact had precedents in all ages of literature, especially the effete ages, and in the Elizabethan age is mainly remarkable for having been the harbinger of strength instead of the token of decay. This may be explained in some measure by the fact that *Euphues* was to a great extent written for the Court, and that, in comparison with the nation, the Court of Elizabeth, brilliant as it was, was but a coterie, with no such influence as the Court of Louis XIV. afterwards exerted over France. Plain men went on writing and talking as of old, profiting perhaps by that increased attention to the structure of the period which was Lyly's one important service to English prose literature.

Lyly has been unfortunate with posterity, his excellent plays and charming

lyrics have until lately been undeservedly neglected, and the best-remembered portion of his work has gained him a bad name. Euphuism will always connote bad taste and affectation; and indeed it cannot be denied that Lyly would have conducted English prose upon a road which must have ended in the emulation of the worst extravagances of the worst foreign writers of the succeeding century. Happily, however, his example, so far as it was evil, soon ceased to be influential, while from another point of view he laid our language under obligations which have as yet been imperfectly recognised. Though with no pretensions to the eloquence and impressiveness of some



Title-page of Lyly's "Whip for an Ape"

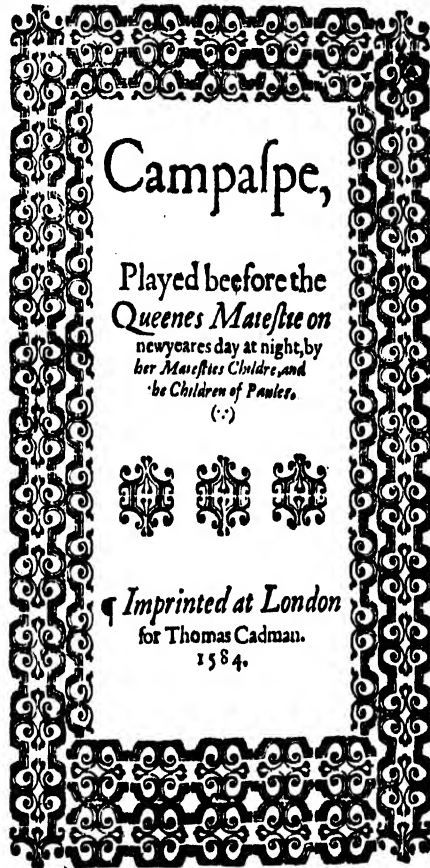
of his predecessors, and (singular in one whose lyrics are so often models of graceful simplicity) going out of his way to avoid the artless elegance of others, he is yet one of the first conscious artists in English prose. Like the objects of his imitation, Guevara and Pettie, he, as remarked by Mr. Warwick Bond, conceives of the sentence as "a piece of literary architecture, whose end is foreseen in the beginning, and whose parts are calculated to minister to the total effect." This was a very important step forward. After all, the repellent feature of "euphuism" is not so much absolute bad taste as the continual effort to refine upon ordinary expression. The saying is not amiss in itself, but the constant succession of sparkling trifles becomes fatiguing. *Turpe est difficiles habere nugas.* The following extract from a letter of Philautus to his false friend is a fair specimen of Lyly's style :

Could'st thou, Euphuës, for the love of a fruitless pleasure, violate the league than the entire love of a loyal friend ? If thou didst determine with thyself at the first to be false, why didst thou swear to be true ? If to be true, why art thou false ? If thou wast minded both falsely and forgedly to deceive me, why didst thou flutter and dissemble with me at the first ? If to love me, why dost thou flinch at the last ? If the sacred bands of amity did delight thee, why didst thou break them ? if dislike thee, why didst thou praise them ? Dost thou not know that a perfect friend should be like the glow-worm, which shineth most bright in the dark ? or like the pure frankincense which smelleth more sweet when it is in the fire ? or at the least not unlike the damask rose which is sweeter in the still than on the stalk ? But thou, Euphuës, dost rather resemble the swallow which in the summer creepeth under the eaves of every house, and in the winter leaveth nothing but dirt behind, or the bumble-bee which having sucked honey out of the fair flower, doth leave it and loath it, or the spider which in the finest web doth hang the fairest fly.

Lyly's admonitions on the conduct of life are in general very sound, and his advice to youth supplied much material to Polonius. He was evidently a very well-read man, and would seem to have occupied a good social position, having been four times elected to Parliament. If, however, his constant and fruitless importunity for a place at Court is to be excused, it can only be on the ground of narrow circumstances. This might well be the case after the abolition of the

St. Paul's performances in 1590. After this date, save for his elections to Parliament and his petitions, but little is heard of him. He is identified with the "John Lyllie" who was buried in St. Bartholomew the Less on Nov. 30, 1606. His plays and lyrics will be noticed in another place. As an educationist his position is not unimportant. His positive precepts, in conscious or unconscious obedience to the precept of Sir Thomas Elyot, are mostly translated from Plutarch, but the spirit of his writing throughout is liberal and vivifying. The idea of introducing "the University of Athens" is borrowed from Guevara, but Lyly is evidently thinking of Oxford. Like Ascham, he conceived of education as a process extending throughout the whole of life, and not terminating with a young man's emancipation from college. The main defect of *Euphues*, considered as an educational manifesto, is that the situations are few and

feebly handled, so that there is no adequate display of principle in action. It will be seen that the peculiarity of *Euphues* consists less in phraseology than in style; and that the chief tricks of style are the false glitter of constant antithesis, and the superabundance of eccentric metaphor. These certainly make some amends for the general flatness of the book considered as a story, and for the didactic character of the appendages which eke it out after the story is over, *Euphues and his Ephæbus*, *Euphues and Atheos*, *Euphues and his England*. The modern reader may in addition find entertainment, not designed as such by the author, in the latter's endless illustrations from natural history, mostly of a character to make a modern naturalist's hair



Title-page of Lyly's "Campaspe" 1584

stand on end. He will find himself, for example, competent to prescribe for a sow, a tortoise, a bear, and a hart :

The filthy sow when she is sick eateth the sea-crab and is immediately recovered : the tortoise having tasted the viper sucketh origanum and is quickly revived : the bear, ready to pine, licketh up the ants, and is recovered : the hart, being pierced with the dart, runneth out of hand to the herb dictanum, and is healed. And can

men by no herb, by no art, by no way, procure a remedy for the impatient disease of love ? Ah ! well, I perceive that Love is not unlike the fig-tree, whose fruit is sweet, whose root is more bitter than the claw of a bittern.

*PHILLIS:*  
Honoured with Pa-  
storall Sonnets, Elegies, and amo-  
rous delights.

VVhere-vnto is annexed, the tragicall  
complaynt of *Estred*.

*Iam Phœbus disjungit equos, iam Cithæ-  
stia iungit.*



At London,  
Printed for Iohn Busbie, and are to  
be sold at his shoppe, at the West-doore  
of Paules. 1593.

Title-page of Lodge's "Phillis" 1593

It is somewhat difficult to determine where to place THOMAS LODGE (1558-1625), but since, although his gifts are best displayed in his lyrics, his best known work is the romance of *Rosalynde*, from which Shakespeare borrowed the plot of *As You Like It*, he may perhaps be best introduced here, reserving his poems for another place. He was a son of Sir Thomas Lodge, Lord Mayor in 1562, and Governor of the Russia Company, went to Oxford, adopted the profession of the law and renounced it for literature, incurring thereby the parental displeasure and apparently disinheritance also. He joined the literary set of Peele and Greene, made unsuccessful attempts as a dramatist, sometimes in con-

federacy with the latter, and wrote pamphlets against two classes of mankind held in especial abhorrence by unsuccessful men of letters, critics and usurers. At length he found his true vocation ; and his volumes of verse, *Scilla's Metamorphosis* (1589) and *Phillis* (1593), with his romance of *Rosalynde* (1590), with many beautiful lyrics scattered through other works of less account, entitle him to a highly respectable place among the minor Elizabethans. His life meanwhile had been adventurous, for some time he was a soldier ; about 1588 he made a voyage to the Canaries and Azores ; and in 1591 accompanied Cavendish's expedition to Brazil. Towards 1600 a change came over him, he became a Roman Catholic, and



adopted the medical profession, having obtained, it is said, a degree from Avignon. At one time he was obliged to quit the country, and he appears to have been always more or less pressed by pecuniary difficulties, but he seems to have maintained a respectable position and to have enjoyed a fair amount of practice, even though his patients, among whom are named several persons of rank, left him time to translate Josephus and Seneca. He died in 1625.

Lodge is an excellent minor poet, whose lyrics will be noticed in another place. As a prose writer his reputation rests chiefly upon his *Rosalynde*, which derives directly from the *Euphues* of Lyly, but is greatly superior in plot, and, though artificial, less ambitious in diction. The merit of the invention is sufficiently attested by the approbation of Shakespeare, who has borrowed nearly the whole of it for the plot of *As You Like It*. The following description of the wrestling match, upon which the action hinges, is a favourable specimen of the style :

The Norman seeing this young gentleman fettered in the looks of the ladies drove him out of his memento with a shake by the shoulder : Rosaden looking back with an angry frown, as if he had been wakened from some pleasant dream, discovered to all by the fury of his countenance that he was a man of some high thoughts :

but when they all noted his youth, and the sweetness of his visage, with a general applause of favour they grieved that so goodly a young man should venture with so base an action ; but seeing it were to his dishonour to hinder him from his enterprise, they wished him to be graced with the palm of victory. After Rosaden was thus called out of his memento by the Norman, he roughly clapped him with so fierce an encounter that they both fell to the ground, and with the violence of the fall were forced to breathe : in which space the Norman called to mind by all tokens that this was he whom Saladin had appointed him to kill ; which conjecture made him stretch every limb, and try every sinew, that by working his death he might recover the gold which so bountifully was promised him. On the contrary part Rosaden while he breathed was not idle, but still cast his eyes upon Rosalind, who to encourage him with a favour lent him such an amorous look as might have made the most coward desperate : which glance of Rosalind so fired the passionate desires of Rosaden, that turning to the Norman he ran upon him and braved him with a strong encounter : the Norman received him as valiantly, that there was a sore combat, hard to judge on whose side fortune would be prodigal. At last Rosaden calling to mind the beauty of his new mistress, the fame of his father's honour, and the disgrace that should fall to his house by his misfortune, roused himself and threw the Norman against the ground, falling upon his chest with



Illustration from the pamphlet "Greene in Conceyte" 1598

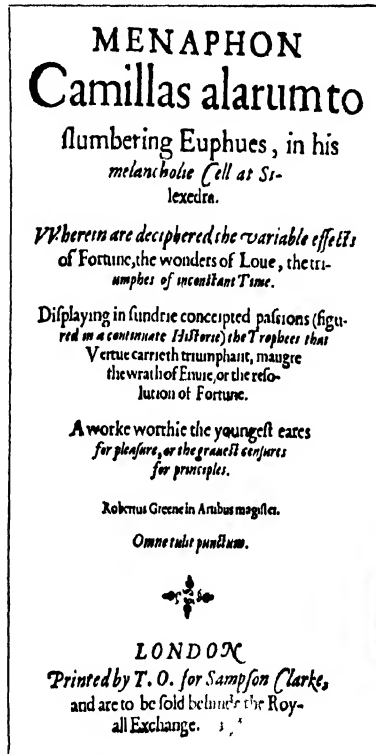
so willing a weight, that the Norman yielded Nature her due and Rosaden the victory.

Robert  
Greene

The place of Lodge's associate, ROBERT GREENE (1560?–1592) is also ambiguous, and he will claim special notice among dramatists; but, upon the whole, it may be most convenient to take his biography in connection with Lodge's. Born at Norwich and educated at Cambridge, he travelled on the Continent, and upon his return about 1580 betook himself to literature, leading a very irregular life. "No place," he says, "would please me to

abide in, nor no vocation cause me to stay myself in." The testimony of his friends seems to afford reasonable ground for believing his bitter self-reproaches, and the accusations of his malignant enemy, Gabriel Harvey, to be grossly exaggerated; but there is no doubt that he deserted his wife and child, and that his six remaining years were spent in London as a man about town. Whatever his frailties, however, his literary industry was extraordinary, and his numerous pamphlets have in general a moral aim, although from the nature of the subjects they cannot always be edifying, the most important being directed to the exposure of the various descriptions of rascality from which the author had suffered, but which there is no ground to accuse him of having practised. He died in September 1592, indebted for burial, as he had long been indebted for food and lodging, to the charity of a poor shoemaker and his wife.

Greene's poetical and dramatic works will be noticed elsewhere. His other



Title-page of Greene's  
"Menaphon" 1589

writings consist chiefly of romances and pamphlets. The most important of the former are *Menaphon*, also entitled *Greene's Arcadia*, *Perimedes the Blacksmith*, and *Pandosto*, otherwise known as *Dorastus and Fawnia*, remarkable as the source of the plot of *The Winter's Tale*. It was extremely popular, continuing to be reprinted until 1735, and, an unusual phenomenon in the case of an early English book, had two French translations. At the present day these fictions are chiefly interesting as evincing the general atmosphere of romantic sentiment which so greatly influenced the works of the dramatists. Greene made no attempt to depict the manners of his time in his novels, but partly supplied the defect by his pamphlets, which in some measure reflect the tastes and humours of the public. Some are short tales

or fanciful dialogues, others expose the cheats and vices of the town, or take up the author's literary quarrels. The most remarkable is the *Groat's Worth of Wit bought with a Million of Repentance*, celebrated for its attack upon Shakespeare as an "upstart crow," an invaluable testimony to the popularity of Shakespeare's early plays, and good evidence that he could not have been long before the public in 1592.

Before passing to the more realistic performance of Thomas Nash, some writers may be named who belonged more distinctly to the circle of Lodge and Greene, and whose stories, now barely readable except for curiosity's sake, enjoyed wide popularity in their own day. The most remarkable, perhaps, is BAR-NABE RICH (1540? -1620?), a soldier and voluminous writer on military and Irish matters. His principal novel, *Don Simonides*, is much in the style of Lyly; the plot of *Twelfth Night* is partly derived from one of his translated stories, *Apollonius and Silla*. The *Parismus* of EMANUEL FORD (1598) imitated the Spanish romances of chivalry, and, as well as the same author's *Montelion*, attained extraordinary popularity. ANTHONY MUNDAY, to be mentioned hereafter as a dramatist, translated many romances of the same type. The popularity of Greene was evinced by John Dickenson recalling him from the shades to father Dickenson's own pastoral romance of *Valeria* (1598). These fictions fatigue, not so much by their length, which is not in general excessive, as by their childishness and untruth to nature, yet there is in general a poetic touch about them which redeems them from contempt.

The history of THOMAS NASH (1567-1601), the son of a curate at Lowestoft, bears a strong resemblance to that of Greene. Like Greene, he was a sizar of St. John's College, Cambridge, and came to town to seek fortune by the exercise of his wit and parts. Like Greene he was prolific in satirical pamphlets, rather, however, literary lampoons than exposures of the follies and vices of the age, which latter, indeed, some of his own writings, which fortunately for his reputation have remained in manuscript, were but too well calculated to promote. Detesting Puritanism, probably out of reaction against his father's strictness, he took the anti-Puritan side in the Marprelate controversy, and is credited with a considerable share in bringing it to an end. His literary pamphlets, witty and scurrilous, made him hosts

FOVRE LETTERS,  
and certaine Sonnets:

*Especially touching Robert Greene, and other parties,  
by him abused:*

But incidently of diuers excellent persons,  
and some matters of note.

*To all courteous minde, that will vouchsafe the reading.*



L O N D O N  
Imprinted by Iohn Wolfe,  
1 5 9 2.

Title-page of Nash's "Four Letters," 1592

Thomas  
Nash

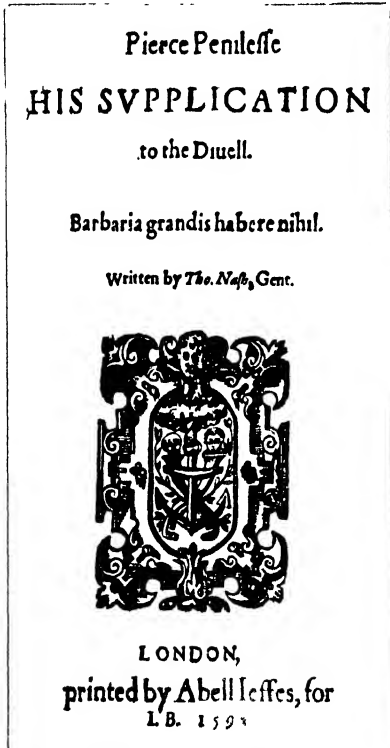
of enemies, but he had also many friends. He vindicated the deceased Greene against the attacks of Gabriel Harvey; he completed and published Marlowe's unfinished tragedy of *Dido*; and he is praised by Lodge, Middleton, and Dekker. In 1597 a satirical comedy, *The Isle of Dogs*, procured him some months imprisonment, and he seems to have been in needy circumstances for the short remainder of his life. He died some time in 1601, leaving the character of "a man who had never paid shoemaker or tailor."

Nash, like Greene, is a playwright and a poet, and opportunity will be found for speaking of him in both capacities. He is much less truly a poet than Greene, whom, on the other hand, he surpasses in vigour, and his outlook over life is considerably wider. A quarrelsome temper drove him into the Marprelate controversy, and he carried on a most embittered dispute with Gabriel Harvey for years, until the Archbishop of Canterbury imposed silence upon both. His irritable mood was further exasperated by poverty and the sense of wrong operating upon an abnormal self-esteem. In the most remarkable of his tracts, *Pierce Pennilesse's Supplication to the Devil* (1592), a general outbreak against all the classes which had provoked his envy or jealousy, he says of himself:

Having spent many years in studying how to live, and lived a long time without money; having tired my youth with folly, and surfeited my mind with vanity, I began at length to look back to repentance, and address my endeavours to prosperity. But all in vain, I sat up late and rose early, contended with the cold and conversed with scarcity; for all my labours

turned to loss, my vulgar muse was despised and neglected, my pains not regarded, or slightly rewarded, and I myself in prime of my best wit laid open to poverty.

Nash is a valuable writer for his illustrations of the manners of his time, and few of his pages are without strokes of quaint sarcastic humour. His only production of literary importance, however, is his romance, *The Unfortunate Traveller; or, the Life of Jack Wilton* (1593), and this not so much from any special merit as from being a remarkable forerunner of the picaresque English novel of the eighteenth century, and of the historical novel also, the action being laid on the Continent in the time of the Field of Cloth of Gold. The personages are uninteresting, but the incidents suffice to keep the reader's attention alive, and many scenes and descriptions are evidently taken from the writer's personal experience. The following lively picture of



Title-page of "Pierce Penilesse," 1592

disputants before the Duke of Saxony at Wittenberg was probably drawn nearer home :

One pecked like a crane with his fore-finger at every half-syllable he brought forth, and nodded with his nose like an old singing man teaching a young chorister to keep time. Another would be sure to wipe his mouth with his handkercher at the end of every full point. And even when he thought he had cast a figure so curiously as he dived over head and ears into his auditor's admiration, he would take occasion to stroke up his hair, and trim up his mustachios twice or thrice over while they might have leisure to applaud him. A third wavered and waggled his head like a proud horse playing with his bridle, or as I have seen some fantastical swimmer at every stroke train his chin sidelong over his left shoulder. A fourth sweat and foamed at the mouth for very anger, his adversary had denied that part of his syllogism which he was not prepared to answer. A fifth spread his arms like an usher that goes before to make room, and thript with his finger and thumb when he thought he had tickled it with a conclusion. A sixth hung down his countenance like a sheep, and stuttered and slavered very pitifully when his invention was stepped aside out of the way. A seventh gasped and gaped for wind, and groaned in his pronunciation as if he were hard bound in some bad argument. Gross plodders were they all, that had some learning and reading, but no wit to make use of it. They imagined the Duke took the greatest pleasure and contentment to hear them speak Latin, and as long as they talked nothing but Tully he was bound to attend to them. A most vain thing it is in many universities at this day that they count him excellent eloquent who stealeth not whole phrases but whole pages out of Tully. If of a number of shreds of his sentences he can shape an oration, from all the world he carries it away, though in truth it be no more than a fool's coat of many colours.

It might well be expected that, considering the general spirit of curiosity abroad in the Elizabethan era, the growing opulence and refinement of the language, and the copious stores of valuable matter existing in other literature, the period would be distinguished by great achievements in translation. Such was, indeed, the case as regarded prose literature. The translators of poems in general wanted genius and an appreciation of metrical form ; some of the prose translators were among the most cultivated and scholarly men of their nation ; deeply penetrated with a sense of the excellence of their originals, and restrained by the imitation of them from the quaintness and extravagance which so frequently mar the best compositions of their own age.

By far the most important and successful undertaking of the time in the regions of translation was the gradual elaboration of the Authorised Version of the Scriptures. Wycliffe and his followers had, as we have seen, bequeathed a noble rendering, but, apart from the changes rendered necessary by the process of time, it was needful to transform a version framed after the Latin Vulgate into a faithful representative of the original Greek and Hebrew. England was at first far behind other countries in this respect, no translation of any part of the Scriptures appearing the half-century following the introduction of printing, and the first that did appear being executed abroad. The imputation of heresy which attached to Wycliffe would naturally prevent the reprinting of his version, and the omission of the rulers of the Church to provide a substitute is sufficient proof of their resolution to keep the book from the people as long as they could. The spell was broken by a reformer, WILLIAM

*Translation  
of the  
Scriptures*

TYNDALE, a man of heroic mould. With the aid of a Franciscan friar, and another anonymous helper, he succeeded in printing a portion of his own translation of the *New Testament* at Cologne in 1526, and the whole at Worms in the same or the following year. In 1530 he printed a translation of the Pentateuch at Marburg. Here he was on unsure ground, his knowledge of Hebrew cannot have been extensive, and he relied much on the old Wycliffite translation. He is said to have been assisted by Miles Coverdale, who had already been at work upon a complete translation, instigated and supported by Thomas Cromwell. This came forth in October 1535, exactly a year before the martyrdom of Tyndale, who had issued two more editions of his Testament, and his translations were subsequently incorporated in the so-called *Matthew Bible* (1537). Coverdale was not competent to translate directly from the Greek and Hebrew, and his version was made from that of Pagninus with corrections derived from the Wycliffe Bible and Luther's and other German versions. Though published at Antwerp, it was probably printed at Zurich. Times had changed greatly in England since Tyndale's *New Testament* had been prohibited; Coverdale's Bible found a ready admission into the country, and the *Matthew Bible* of 1537 appeared with the royal licence. So long ago as 1530 Henry had appointed a Commission of Inquiry, which had reported in favour of making a translation, but against publishing it. At the instance of Convocation, the question was taken up again, and Cranmer, as his office required, took the lead. He divided, his secretary Ralph Morrice tells us, an old version of the New Testament, which must have been Wycliffe's, for Tyndale's was new, into nine or ten parts, which he distributed among bishops and other men of learning, requiring them to return these corrected by a certain day. The same course was, no doubt, taken with the Old Testament, though no record remains. The Bible thus prepared, happily based on Wycliffe's, but no less happily corrected by reference to the original texts or faithful renderings of these, was for some unknown reason directed to be printed at Paris; but when in December 1538 the French Government stopped the impression, at the solicitation of the Pope, the sheets already printed, with the types themselves, were smuggled over to England; the workmen followed, and the book quitted the press in April 1539. It had been largely executed at the expense of Cromwell, whose arms appeared on the title and upon those of the London editions of the following year, though they were defaced upon his fall and execution. This edition bears on the title-page the momentous words: "This is the Bible appointed to the use of the churches." Its Psalter remains unaltered in the Book of Common Prayer.

"The Great Bible," as Cranmer's Bible was fitly called, was frequently reprinted, usually in a smaller form, until the accession of Mary caused its prohibition. This temporary abeyance was, no doubt, thought a favourable opportunity to supersede it by an amended version. In 1558 Coverdale and three other scholars, William Whittingham, Anthony Gilby, and Thomas Sampson, met at Geneva, and the last three, probably directed by Coverdale, prepared the revised version known as the *Genevan Bible*. This was recom-

mended to the Puritan party by a marginal commentary, and to readers in general by the adoption of Roman type and by division into verses. It was published in April 1560, and coming in to fill the gap caused by the cessation of Bible printing in England since 1553, obtained a wide popularity. The bishops, to whom the Puritan views of the Genevan translators were in general unacceptable, brought out in 1568 a rival version, generally known as the *Bishops' Bible*, which nevertheless, in spite of its official character, did not obtain the popularity of the Genevan version. It must be borne in mind that the

differences were not very material

With the same wise conservatism and recognition of the principle of continuity that Cranmer had shown, Archbishop Parker had directed the revisers "to follow the common English translation used in the churches, and not to recede from it but where it varieth manifestly from the Hebrew or Greek original." Practically, therefore, England had but one Bible. The desirability of perfect uniformity, nevertheless, was evident, but the revision needed to effect it was judiciously delayed until the accession of James I. seemed to present an opportunity, unfortunately lost, for allaying contentions in the Church, and also allowed the extension of Biblical revision to Scotland. The proposal, originally made by Dr. Reynolds, President of Corpus Christi College, Oxford,

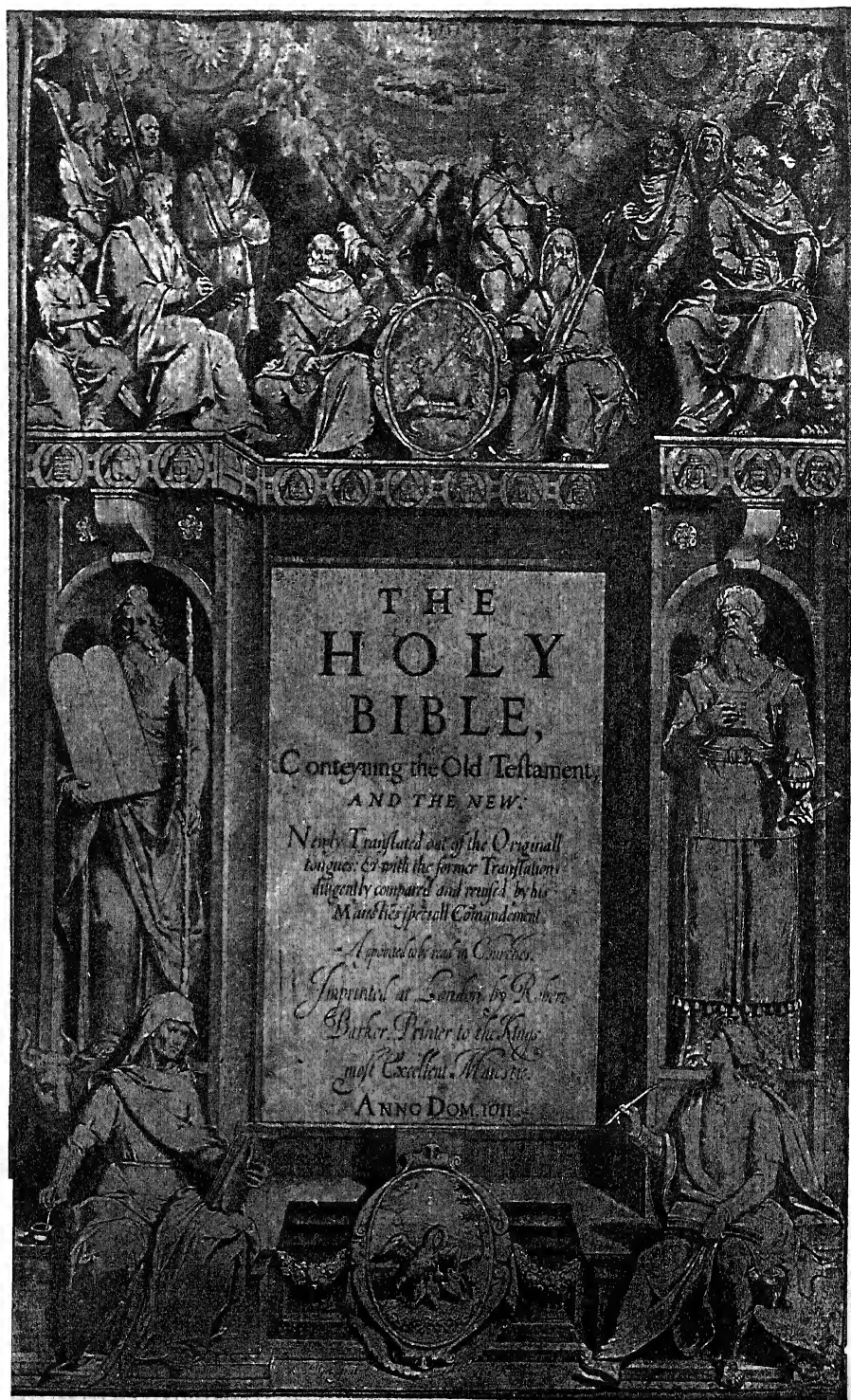
and strongly supported by the King, was adopted at the Hampton Court Conference of 1604. Forty-six eminent scholars were appointed, divided into six committees, two meeting at Westminster, two at Oxford, and two at Cambridge; and suggestions from other quarters were not disdained. So much was biblical erudition then a monopoly of the clergy that only one layman appears among the translators, and he, Sir Henry Savile, a quasi-ecclesiastic as Warden of Merton and Provost of Eton. If any name deserves to be pre-eminently connected with this immortal work, it is that of LANCELOT ANDREWS, Bishop of Winchester, unequalled in his own communion as a devotional writer, and President of the first committee, entrusted with the entire translation between Genesis and Second Kings. Bishop Smith, of Gloucester, also deserves exceptional mention as the author of the Preface, a most significant document, as evincing the immense advantage which the English Bible derived from the



**Lancelot Andrews**

*From a scarce engraving done by  
W. Hollar in 1643*

*Lancelot  
Andrews*



Title-page of the "Bishops' Bible," 1611



translators' obedience to the wise injunction, the first and most important of fourteen excellent rules, "The ordinary Bible read in the church, commonly called the *Bishops' Bible*, to be followed, and as little altered as the truth of the original will permit." The virtue of the *Bishops' Bible* consists in the fact that the same regulation had been followed in its case, insomuch that the language of the Authorised Version is not wholly Elizabethan or Jacobean, but at bottom English of the fourteenth century, greatly enriched and adorned, it is true, by the gains of the Elizabethan and Jacobean times, but still coming before the people of its day as something venerable for its style as well as for its substance, and parted by a wide gulf from ordinary literature. Bishop Smith's Preface was justly reputed a fine composition in its time, but "the fashion of this world passeth away." Had the entire translation been executed in this manner, it would now be deemed admirable, but intolerable. We owe it to the wisdom of Tyndale, and Cranmer, and Parker, and King James, that the English Bible is like a mediæval cathedral, the work of successive generations. The same may probably be said of the German Bible, for Luther had many, though obscure, predecessors. Where it has been necessary, as it were, to extemporise a translation, the Bible has never taken the like hold upon the national conscience or the national literature.

The Authorised Version was given to the people in 1611, one year after the publication at Douai of the Roman Catholic version from the Vulgate, commenced by the publication of the New Testament at Rheims in 1582, "the only other English Bible," Mr. Blunt remarks, "which has ever lived beyond one edition."

It would be impossible to give any account here of the numerous and excellent prose translators who in the reign of Elizabeth contributed so much to enrich the language and extend the knowledge and sympathies of their nation. Adlington's *Apuleius* and Underdown's *Heliodorus* are fine examples, though the latter, first published in 1569, was pronounced "almost obsoleted" by 1622. One great translator imperatively claims notice, not only from his having bestowed a classic upon English literature, but from his special connection with Shakespeare.

*Prose  
Translators*

Sir THOMAS NORTH (1535 ? -1601 ?) was a younger son of the first Baron North, and according to the Earl of Leicester, "a very honest gentleman, who hath many good things in him which are drowned only by poverty." The best things in him, however, appear to have been brought out of him by this agency, for his diligence as a translator was probably owing to his impecunious condition. In 1557 he translated Guevara's *Dial of Princes*, a briefer recension of which had already been rendered by Lord Berners. These versions have been thought to have exerted much influence upon the *Euphues* of John Lyly, as the original certainly did upon Gongora, the Lyly of Spain. North also made an excellent translation of the *Moral Philosophy* of the Italian Doni, a book much more picturesque than the title promises, being in fact a book of Eastern fables.

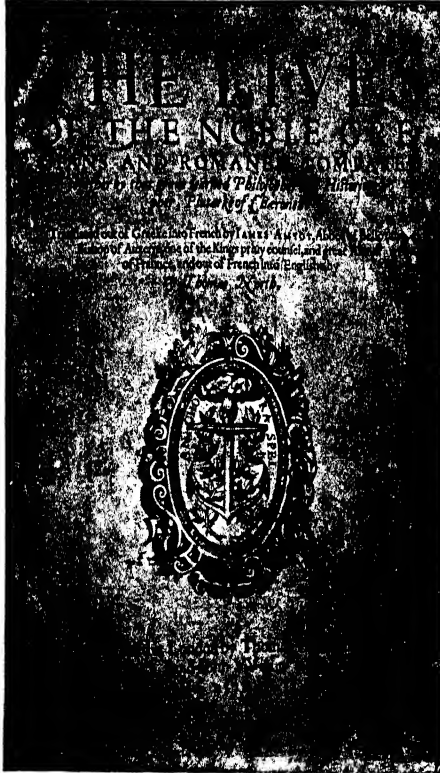
*Sir Thomas  
North*

His fame rests, however, upon another book, the translation of *Plutarch's*

*Lives*, published in 1579. The version labours under what might at first sight seem an insurmountable disqualification; it is not made from Plutarch direct, but from the French translation of Amyot. But Amyot is one of the few translators in whose hands an author gains more than he loses. North, without injury to Amyot's naïve picturesqueness, envelops it in the glory of a grand style; and Plutarch, originally more commendable for his matter than his manner, becomes a model of fine Elizabethan diction. He was, indeed, a fit author for the Elizabethan epoch; "the Doctor," as Emerson

calls him, "and historian of heroism."

In comparison with the general spirit of his work, North's frequent misprisions of Amyot's meaning, to say nothing of Plutarch's, are of the smallest consequence: and it is deeply to be regretted that he should so long have been regarded as an antiquated writer. The other versions of Plutarch in our language are meritorious but not inspiring, and can exert little of the moral influence that streams abundantly from North. His revival in our day is mainly to be attributed to the discovery of Shakespeare's indebtedness to him. But for him the Roman plays might never have been written, and the comparison of his text with Shakespeare's is most entertaining. First his lives of Cæsar, Brutus, Antony, Coriolanus were reprinted as the most important in connection with the study of Shakespeare, and we have now progressed to a complete edition, which



Title-page of North's translation of  
"Plutarch's Lives," 1579

it may be hoped will never be allowed to remain out of print.

North's description of the slaying of Pyrrhus is a fair specimen of his nervous and animated style:

Wherefore Pyrrhus seeing his people thus troubled and hurried to and fro, took off his crown from his head which he wore upon his helmet, that made him known of his men afar off, and gave it to one of his familiars that was next unto him: and trusting then to the goodness of his horse, flew upon his enemies that followed him. It fortuned that one hurt him with a pike, but the wound was neither dangerous nor great: wherefore Pyrrhus set upon him who had hurt him, who was an Argian boor, a man of mean condition and a poor old woman's son, whose mother at that present time was gotten up to the top of the tiles of a house, as all other women of the city were, to see the fight. And she perceiving that it was her son whom Pyrrhus came upon, was so affrighted to see him in that danger that she took

tile, and with both her hands cast it upon Pyrrhus. The tile, falling from his head by reason of his headpiece, lighted full in the nap of his neck, and brake his neck bone asunder, wherewith he was suddenly so benumbed that he lost his sight with the blow, the reins of his bridle fell out of his hand, and himself fell from his horse to the ground, by Licymnius' tomb, before any man knew what he was, at least of the common people. Until at the last there came one Zopyrus that was at pay with Antigonus, and two or three other soldiers also that ran straight to the place, and knowing him, dragged his body into a gate, even as he was coming again to himself out of this trance. This Zopyrus drew out a Slavon sword he wore by his side, to strike off his head. But Pyrrhus cast such a grim countenance on him between his eyes that made him so afraid, and his hand so to strike therewith, that being thus amazed he did not strike him right in the place where he should have cut off his head, but killed him right in the mouth about his chin, so that he was a great while ere he could strike off his head.

The mention of a *Slavon* sword, the Slavonians being unheard of in history until eight centuries after Pyrrhus, is an instance of North's dependence upon Amyot. Plutarch says, "an *Illyrian* sword," which Amyot, dutifully followed by North, renders *Esclavon*.

The following is a good example of North's rendering of Plutarch's more reflective vein :

Aemilius had four sons, two of the which he gave in adoption unto the families of Scipio and of Fabius, and two other which he had by his second wife he brought up with him in his own house, and were both yet very young. Of the which the one died, being fourteen years of age, five days before his father's triumph : and the other died also three days after the pomp of triumph, at twelve years of age. When this sorrowful chance had befallen him, every one in Rome did pity him in their hearts : but fortune's spite and cruelty did more grieve and fear them, to see her little regard towards him, to put into a house of triumph, full of honour and glory and of sacrifices and joy such a pitiful mourning, and mingling of sorrows and lamentations of death, amongst such songs of triumph and victory. Notwithstanding this, Aemilius taking things like a wise man, thought that he was not only to use constancy and magnanimity against the sword and pike of the enemy : but alike also against all adversity and enmity of spiteful fortune. So he wisely weighed and considered his present misfortune with his former prosperity ; and finding his misfortune counterpoised with felicity, and his private griefs cut off with common joy, he gave no place to his sorrows and mischances, neither blemished any way the dignity of his triumph and victory. For when he had buried the eldest of his two last sons, he left not to make his triumphal entry, as you have heard before. And his second son also being deceased after his triumph, he caused the people to assemble, and in the face of the whole city he made an oration, not like a discomfited man, but like one rather that did comfort his sorrowful countrymen for his mischance.

Nothing can be more likely than that North's *Plutarch* was brought to Shakespeare's notice by the printer of the 1595 edition, Richard Field, a Stratford-on-Avon man of about Shakespeare's age, who had probably befriended him when he came to London. Shakespeare has paid Plutarch the compliment of following him as he follows Nature ; he adheres closely to his narrative, appropriates his happy phrases and picturesque touches, but heightens and almost transforms these by the magic of his diction. Plutarch, for example, thus describes Cæsar's suspicion of Cassius :

Cæsar also had Cassius in great jealousy, and suspected him much : whereupon he said on a time to his friends, "What will Cassius do, think ye ? I like not his pale looks." Another time, when Cæsar's friends complained unto him of Antonius and

Dolabella that they pretended some mischief towards him : he answered them again, "As for those fat men and smooth-combed heads," quoth he, "I never reckon of them : but these pale-visaged and carrion lean people, I fear them most," meaning Brutus and Cassius.

Thus expanded by Shakespeare :

*Cæsar.* Let me have men about me that are fat:  
Sleek-headed men, and such as sleep o' nights.  
Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look ;  
He thinks too much: such men are dangerous.

*Antony.* Fear him not, Cæsar ; he's not dangerous ;

He is a noble Roman, and well given.

*Cæsar.* Would he were fatter ! But I fear him not ;

Yet, if my name were liable to fear,  
I do not know the man I should avoid  
So much as that spare Cassius. He reads much ;

He is a great observer, and he looks  
Quite through the deeds of men ; he loves no plays,

As thou dost, Antony ; he hears no music ;

Seldom he smiles, and smiles in such a sort,

As if he mocked himself, and scorned his spirit

That could be moved to smile at any thing :

Such men as he be never at heart's ease

Whiles they behold a greater than themselves,

And therefore are they very dangerous.

I rather tell thee what is to be feared  
Than what I fear—for always I am Cæsar.

Come on my right hand, for this ear is deaf,

And tell me truly what thou think'st of him.



John Florio

From the portrait in the 1613 edition of "Montaigne"

*John Florio*

One other translator deserves a word of notice, associated with North as he is by the fact that his translation also was used by Shakespeare. The Utopia depicted by Gonzago in *The Tempest* is undoubtedly derived from the admirable translation of Montaigne published in 1603 by JOHN FLORIO (1553?–1625), the son of a refugee Italian protestant minister. Florio must have been personally acquainted with Shakespeare, having been in the household of Southampton and patronised by Pembroke. He appears to have been intimate with many men of letters, and availed himself of his knowledge of Italian to translate Ramusio's collection of travels and a large collection of Italian proverbs, also to compile an Italian dictionary under the title of *A World of Words*. A copy of his Montaigne in the British Museum bears what

purports to be Shakespeare's autograph, but its authenticity is not generally admitted.

One important, though ephemeral, form of literature remains to be noticed — the newspaper. It is mentioned here, though with some anticipation of

*The newspaper.*

The English Mercury<sup>29</sup>  
No. —

Whitehall July 26<sup>th</sup> 1588 (Published by Authority). 8

A Journal of what has passed since the 21<sup>st</sup> of this month betwixt our majesties Fleet & that of Spain, transmitted by the Admiral to the Lords of the Council.

July 22<sup>d</sup>. The whole Fleet being comber up we sailed in pursuit of our Enemy, who bore along by the North. A large Discovoy Ship belonging to the Spanish Squadron had a very deep shot on her by a Dutch Gunner <sup>that</sup> thought himself ill used, by very much damaged the enemy were forced to abandon, & turn to a drift. The Lord Thomas Howard by Captain Howdens won by the Admirals Order sent on board her, the Decks were fallen in, the Sticks broken, the Stern blown out, 50 poor Sailors burnt with Powder in a most terrible manner in this miserable Condition she was immediately sent into Weymouth. — this ship had the Ensigne military that on board her, which was moved in to another ship, before we took her. The following Night arriving Calm the 4 Galeas of Naples singled the selves out as if they would attack some of our ships which had advanced too far <sup>from</sup> the Line, but they attempted nothing.

ved them to be in some distress, but down with her own Ship, the Elizabeth, the Leicester Gallies, the Golden Lion, the Victory & the Dreadnought lost Epiphane — the Duke of Medina, the St. Martin, & six or seven others of his best Gallies were indeavour'd to catch, except his Lordship, but after a smart Conflict, the enemy were obliged to give way, & for their better security threw powder into a Boat, placing their largest and best armed Ships one against another to cover the weaker. — In other parts of the Action we had the Squadron fitted out by the City of London behaved themselves very gallantly particularly the May Flower which took the first Venetian Ship, & others of her companions did some smaller ones, nor had we any other loss, except that of Captain Will. Cour. slain by a <sup>land</sup> shot <sup>which</sup> he was performing his duty with singular valor.

Facsimile of a portion of the MS. of the spurious "English Mercurie"

British Museum, Birch MS. 4106

chronology, on account of the claim set up and long admitted for England as the nation which first gave newspapers to the world. "By the wisdom of Elizabeth and the prudence of Burleigh," it was affirmed, the *English Mercurie* had been established in 1588, to convey official intelligence respecting

the progress of the Spanish Armada. Who could doubt this when the paper was in the Manuscript Department of the British Museum, open to the inspection of all the world? So it was, but nobody inspected it, and the statement was repeated unchallenged in a hundred places between 1794

and 1839, when Mr. Thomas Watts, afterwards Keeper of Printed Books at the Museum, had the curiosity to look at it, and "the successful imposition of fifty years was shattered to pieces in five minutes." Paper and print were of the eighteenth century, and two MS. copies of numbers, from the numerous corrections evidently the first drafts of the author, are eighteenth century also. It is almost certain that the fabricator was Philip Yorke, second Earl of Hardwicke, who had already essayed a more innocent mystification as the writer of *The Athenian Letters*. News-letters registering particular occur-

T H E  
**English Mercurie.** N<sup>o</sup> 51.  
Published by A U T H O R I T I E,  
For the Prevention of false Reportes.

*Whitehall, July 26th 1588.*

*A Journal of what has passed since the 21st of this Month, betwixt her Majestie's Fleete and that of Spayne; transmitted by the Lorde Highe Admirall to the Lordes of the Councill.*

**J**ULY 22d. The whole Fleete being come up, wee sayled in Pursuite of the Enemie, who bore along by the *Starke*; a large Ship belonging to the *Guypu/coan* Squadrone having beene set on Fire by a *Dutch* Gunner, that thought himself ill used, and very much damaged, the Enemie were forced to abandon and turne her a drift. The Lorde *Thomas Howard* and Capt. *Hawkins* were by the Admirall's order sente on board her; they founde the *Docks* fallen in, the *Steorage* broken, the *Stern* blowne out, and fifty poore Saylor's burnte with Powder in a most terrible Manner. In this myserable Condition, she was immediately sente into *Weymouth*. This Galleon had the Enemie's militarie Chests on board, which they removed into another Ship, before we tooke her. The following Night proving calme, the foure Galleasses of *Naples* singled themselves out, as if they would fall upon some of our Ships, which had advanced too farre from the Line, but they attempted nothing.

July 23d. The *Spanish Armado*, which was now come over against *Portland*, tacked about, and stode in towards the Shoare, which we likewise did. After severall Attempes to get the Winde of each other, a smart Engagement began: The *Triumph*, (commaunded by Rear-Admirall *Forbisher*), with the Rest of his Divisione, having fallen to Leeward were briskly attacked by Don *Juan de Recalde*: They had warme Worke for an Houre and halfe, when the Lorde Admiral oblied them to be in some Distresse, and bore downe with his owne Ship, the *Elizabeth*

C

*Jonas,*

A page of the spurious "English Mercurie"

rences circulated widely both in manuscript and print in most European countries during the early part of the seventeenth century; but no periodical devoted to news appeared in England until, on May 23, 1622, Nathaniel Butter, Nicholas Bunne, and Thomas Archer issued the *Weekly News from Italy, Germany, &c.* Germany, however, had been beforehand with England, the *Frankfurter Journal* having been commenced in 1615.

## CHAPTER III

### SPENSER AND MINOR ELIZABETHAN POETS

AN ancient emblem, recalled to the recollection of the present time by the genius of Burne-Jones, expresses the inexorable revolution of the Wheel of Fortune. As originally conceived, three kings are represented revolving along with the fateful wheel. From the mouth of the one who is descending proceeds the legend, "I have been"; another, surmounting the summit of the circumference, proudly declares, "I am"; a third, ascending, yet more proudly announces, "I am to be." The representation might serve for an allegory of the condition in the middle of the sixteenth century of the three countries, Italy, Portugal, and England, each of which enriched the later Renaissance with a national epic poet. Tasso was driven to seek a theme in the past. The subject of his epic is not national, except in so far as he has contrived to connect it with the House of Ferrara, but he is only too faithful a representative of his country, still teeming with beauty, but deeply infected with that poison of the Counter Reformation which ultimately so nearly destroyed her intellectual life. We blush to be told that the *Jerusalem Delivered* was revised by ecclesiastics with the full assent of the author. Milton's licenser at one time would fain have silenced him, but never presumed to mend him. Camoens—though the symptoms of decay were already beginning to appear—celebrates his country at the height of her fame and glory. Spenser, like the third king in the emblem proclaiming what is not yet but is to be, sets forth the coming glories in a majestic but obscure allegory.

The three poets whom we have thus brought together do indeed wear a family likeness, only to be explained by the degree in which they are representatives of their age. Perhaps in no age have the characters of cavalier and poet been so perfectly united as in the sixteenth century. Poets continue to be usually men of breeding, but, as is inevitable from the great development of literature, the man of letters has encroached upon the courtier and the soldier. In the sixteenth century it is often difficult to decide which type is more prominent in the individual. In Tasso the scholar, in Spenser the courtier, in Camoens the soldier almost rival the poet; but all characters blend together to compose a singularly attractive personality. We shall have to speak further of Spenser's relation to the great contemporary poets of the Continent, and here only note the remarkable circumstance that, while Tasso and Camoens and Ariosto are famous all over Europe, Spenser, except to the English-speaking peoples, is almost unknown. This is no isolated phenomenon; with the exception of Shakespeare and Milton, our most exquisite singers are far less appreciated abroad than those whom we should place in the

second rank. If our Wordsworths and Shelleys and Spensers should ever force themselves upon recalcitrant Europe as Shakespeare and Scott and Byron have done, we shall see another literary revolution and a second Romantic School.

*Edmund  
Spenser*

**Edmund Spenser**, though born in East Smithfield, probably in 1552, was of Lancashire extraction, his father having migrated to London from the neighbourhood of Burnley. The family was well connected, but Spenser's father, like many another cadet of a good house, was compelled to resort to trade, and several years after the poet's birth is found exercising "the art and mystery of clothmaking" in the service of Nicholas Peele, whom, remembering Robert Peel, we must con-



One of the School-rooms at Merchant Taylors, where Spenser was educated

clude to have been a Lancashire man also. It was but natural that the younger Spenser, doubtless a youth of promise, should obtain admittance to Merchant Taylors' School, just founded, and the rather as the warden of the Company at the time was a namesake, and probably a relation. In due time Spenser went to Pembroke Hall, afterwards College, at Cambridge, and is mentioned among thirty-one scholars from London grammar schools admitted to the University in 1569. In the same year he anonymously translated poems from Du Bellay and Petrarch as letterpress for woodcuts introduced to enliven *A Theatre for Worlddlings*, a moral tract translated from the Flemish. He must, therefore, have studied modern as well as classical languages, and his University career, though frequently interrupted by ill-health, was distinguished and profitable. He contracted many friendships, the most important being that with the sour and rancorous, but able and learned, Gabriel Harvey, the "Hobbinol" of *The*





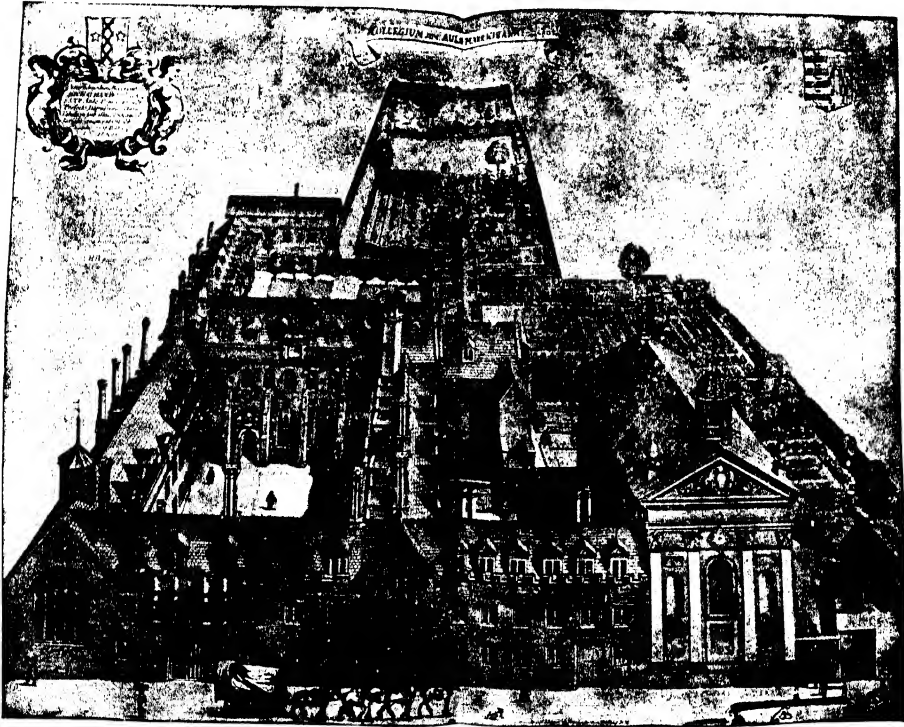
Edmund Spenser.



*Shepherd's Calendar*. After quitting Cambridge in 1576 he repaired for a while to the original abode of his family in the North, and conceived an unreturned passion for the nymph whom he celebrates as Rosalind, in which name, he tells us, the lady's actual appellation is concealed. She is usually thought to have been Rose Dyneley, the daughter of a yeoman near Clitheroe. She appears in his writings as late as *Colin Clout's Come Home Again* (1591). At length the disconsolate swain

Rose, and twitched his mantle blue ;

forsaking his Lancashire witch for London. In 1577 or 1578 he became a member of the household of the Earl of Leicester, perhaps the best position he could have



Pembroke College, Cambridge

From Loggan's "*Cantabrigia Illustrata*," 1688

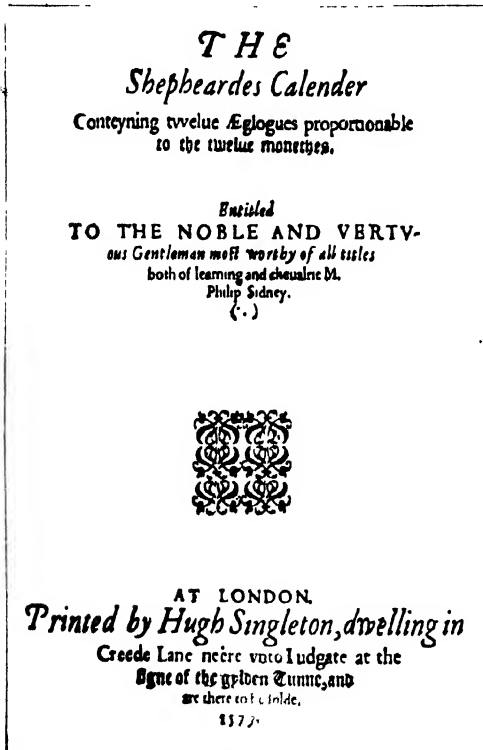
found for the development of his genius by intercourse with kindred minds and initiation into the affairs of the world. Above all, he there formed a close friendship with Philip Sidney, Leicester's nephew and especial favourite, with whom, in conjunction with Sir Edward Dyer and others, he formed a literary society entitled "The Areopagus." Nor did he intermit his former literary friendship with Gabriel Harvey, which, from Harvey's residence at the University, had to be maintained by correspondence. Portions of letters from both correspondents are preserved, and attest Spenser's remarkable literary activity at the period, though most of the works which seem to be indicated as actually written are either lost or have been incorporated with subsequent productions. It is remarkable that he should have written no fewer than nine comedies on the Italian model, not a line of which is preserved. It appears that *The Faerie Queene* was commenced by 1579.

Harvey continually besieged Spenser with importunities on his favourite crotchet of the employment in English of classical metres, regulated by quantity instead of accent, and actually beguiled one of the greatest masters of melody in our language not merely to experiment in this style, but to express a preference for it. The aberration was of short continuance.

Spenser's literary energy at this date was the more remarkable as his especial duty in Leicester's service would seem to have been the conveyance of secret despatches. From allusions in his works, he appears to have visited Ireland on this errand, and to have gone, or to have expected to go, as far as Rome. This

expedition, if it took place, occurred between October 1579 and April 1580. *The Shepherd's Calendar* was published in the December of the former year, and was at once recognised as raising Spenser to the highest rank among contemporary poets.

The favour of Leicester and the friendship of Sidney probably contributed more than his poetical deserts to obtain Government reward for Spenser, but Government patronage took a form more suitable for a civil officer than a poet. Like many another promising youth, Spenser was quartered upon Ireland, and, as Secretary to the Lord Deputy, Lord Grey de Wilton, enlisted in the crusade which England, compelled by the absolute necessity of preventing Spain from obtaining a foothold in the country, was tardily undertaking against Irish barbarism. Even in the ages of faith, it may be doubted whether many champions of the Cross



Title-page of Spenser's "Shepherd's Calendar," 1579

would have followed Godfrey without Syrian castles and vineyards in perspective, and although, as Dean Church eloquently points out, Elizabeth's servants in Ireland actually did feel as knights-errant contending for religion and loyalty against monsters, giants, and enchantments, it can be no reproach to them if they expected the State they served to provide for them. Spenser's opinion of the Irish of his day exactly corresponded with that of the Spanish officers who sought refuge among them after the shipwreck of the Armada; and the friendship and encouragement of Raleigh, and the more substantial consolations of the clerkship to the Court of Chancery in Dublin, the clerkship to the Council of Munster (which, however, he had to purchase), the estate of Kilcolman in Cork, subject to a Crown rent, and various leases of abbey-lands on advantageous terms, made insufficient amends for the uncongenial environment. At the prompting,

as he declares, of Raleigh, he returned to England in 1589, resolved to use all his influence for his return to his native land.

He arrived in London in November, bringing with him the first three books of *The Faerie Queene*. These were published in the following year, and raised him at once to a position of unchallenged supremacy, not only among the poets of his day but among all English poets. The poem, an allegory of Queen Elizabeth, was naturally dedicated to her. "to live," it was grandly added, "with the eternity of her fame." Commendatory poems by Raleigh, Harvey, and others accompanied the text, and, after some delay, genius and interest in union prevailed to procure the author a pension, said to have been cut down by one-half through the economy of Burleigh, as much the father of all Treasury officials as Franklin, according to Carlyle, is "the father of all the Yankees." All the poet's efforts, however,

Publication of  
"The Faerie  
Queene"



The Ruins of Kilcolman Castle

From a drawing by W. H. Bartlett

could not obtain his transference to England, and he returned in 1591 to his house at Kilcolman, where he produced, under the title of *Colin Clout's Come Home Again*, a record of his expedition, with portraits of his literary friends under assumed names. In 1591, also, a number of his early productions were published under the title of *Complaints*. The personal allusions discovered in some among them are said to have led to the temporary suppression of the book.

The Ireland of Elizabeth's time contributed much to steep Spenser's poem in the hues of crusading emprise, and so far helped him, but debarred him from literary intercourse and sympathy. It may have been a suitable abode for the man of letters who, like Raleigh, united the sword to the pen; to the gentle and scholarly Spenser it must have been far otherwise. His residence, Kilcolman Castle, on the high road between Mallow and Limerick, was a small dark tower by the margin of a miniature lake, in our time overlooking a dreary waste, but in his surrounded by wood. Its solitude had at least the advantage of shielding the poet from interruption, and so compensating him for the time which he was compelled to devote to official duties; he may also have been the more disposed to labour assiduously

Spenser's life  
in Ireland

upon the poem from which he expected deliverance. He further sought, and it is to be hoped found, solace in love-making, having become enamoured of a lady whose hand he obtained after a year's wooing, signalled by the composition of his *Amoretti*, a kind of sonnet-diary. The lady has not been identified with

entire certainty, but is believed to have been Elizabeth Boyle, a member of the Earl of Cork's family. Little is known of her person and disposition, but inferences more favourable to her charms than her constancy may be derived from the fact that she found two husbands after Spenser's death. The marriage, which took place at Cork or Youghal on June 11, 1594, was celebrated in Spenser's *Epithalamion*, the noblest of his lyrics, and one of the highest flights of English poetry. In the same year he resigned his clerkship to the Council of Munster in favour of a relative of his wife, and perhaps in consequence of unsuccessful litigation with his troublesome neighbour, Lord Roche. At the end of 1595 he was again in London with three more books of *The Faerie Queene*, which were published early in the following year. They found no less acceptance than the former with the public at large, and gained him the applause of all men of letters. It may,

# THE FAERIE QVEENE.

Disposed into twelue books,

*Fashioning*  
XII. Morall vertues.



LONDON  
Printed for William Ponsonbie.

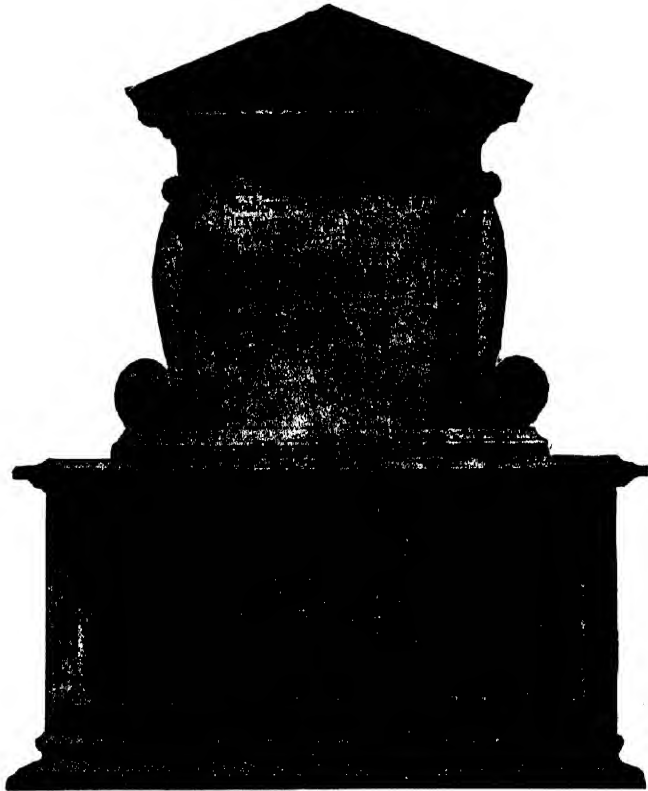
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Title-page of "The Faerie Queene" 1590

indeed, be remarked that no illustrious author seems to have suffered less than Spenser from envy and detraction, a circumstance perhaps even more significant of the sweetness of his nature than of the merit of his verse. The caresses of high society were abundantly bestowed upon him. His next publication, the *Hymns*, was dedicated to two countesses. The Queen turned a deaf ear to the complaints of James VI. of Scotland, who, with more truth than dignity, accused Spenser of having depicted his mother in the character of the witch Duessa. Essex

welcomed Spenser to his house, and a double marriage there celebrated was the theme of the poet's beautiful *Prothalamion*, praised by Coleridge for "the swan-like movement of the lines." But the great business to which the poetry ought to have conduced, Spenser's repatriation in England, made no progress. Perhaps he stood in his own light by composing, though he did not at the time publish, his *View of the Present State of Ireland, Discoursed by Way of a Dialogue between Eudoxus and Irenæus*, which may well have convinced the Government that he was the right sort of man for Munster. The entirely unsympathetic tone of this able tract as regards the native Irish

has been made a subject of reproach to Spenser, and justly so from the point of view both of abstract right and of abstract policy. He merely feels, however, as colonists always feel who find themselves confronted with a hostile indigenous population, with what seems to them insufficient support from the mother country, and are naturally impatient of criticism from "the gentlemen who sit at home at ease." Ireland, in fact, had dealt a much heavier blow at her nationality than any Spenser could devise by her rejection of the Reformation. Had



The Tomb of Edmund Spenser in Westminster Abbey

she become Protestant, the Bible and Prayer-book would have been read in the vernacular by all who could read at all; the ancient language, as in Wales, would have been kept alive by the services of the Church;<sup>1</sup> and Erse literature, far from needing any artificial revival, would have come down to our days in a continuous stream. In such a case the distinction between the Anglo-Scotch and the Irish elements of the population would hardly have existed. It needed religious differences to keep them apart, and prevent the Elizabethan or Jacobean settler from becoming, like his Anglo-Norman predecessor, *Hibernus ipsis Hibernior*.

<sup>1</sup> The writer can never forget the energy with which he has heard Mr. Gladstone descant on this theme its relation to Wales.

*Misfortunes  
and Death of  
Spenser*

Dejected in spirits, and failing in health, Spenser returned to Ireland early in 1597. Little is recorded of his history until, in September 1598, he was made Sheriff of the county of Cork, with many expressions of approval of his valuable services. The moment was most critical. The insurgent Irish, temporarily victorious, were at the very time planning an expedition against the English colonists of Cork. The storm burst in October, and carried all before it. Spenser's mansion at Kilcolman was sacked and burned. He and his wife escaped to Cork with four children—a fifth is said by Ben Jonson to have perished in the flames, but, unless there had been a birth of twins, Spenser's family can hardly have been so numerous. In December, Sir Thomas Norris, the President of Munster, shows confidence in Spenser by sending him to London with despatches, including, no doubt, instructions to make a private report. But grief and hardship had undermined his constitution, and he died at his lodgings in King Street, Westminster, on January 16, 1599. The stories of the privations he underwent must be greatly exaggerated, including as they do the statement that Essex offered him bounty which he declined. He had never been wealthy, and his personal property had probably perished in the burning of his house, but it cannot be believed that he would have been sent on an important mission in a state of destitution, or that ready aid would not have been forthcoming from his London friends. The general appreciation of his greatness was shown by his interment, at the expense of Essex, in Westminster Abbey, within a few yards of the grave of Chaucer; poets, says Camden, thronging to the funeral, and casting their elegies and the pens that had written them into the tomb. A monument intended by Elizabeth was frustrated by a greedy courtier, but one was eventually erected by the Countess of Dorset.

*Spenser's  
Family*

Spenser's widow soon married again. His Munster property, recovered by Essex's campaign in 1599, passed to his eldest son Sylvanus, whose Roman Catholic wife seems to have brought up her son William in her own religion, wherefor, under the Draconic legislation of Cromwell, he incurred the penalty of transplantation into Connaught. This was remitted upon his giving proof of his return to Protestantism, but the forfeited estate was not recovered until after the Restoration. Having thus cast in with the Protestant interest, William Spenser rendered such services to William III. as to acquire extensive possessions in Galway and Roscommon, as well as the estates of an unlucky cousin who had taken the wrong side. The family is now extinct in the male line, but many living persons claim descent from William Spenser's granddaughter Rosamond.

*Spenser's  
Character  
and Genius*

The character, fortunes, and genius of Spenser present a striking affinity to those of his great contemporary Camoens. Both united the soldier and the man of affairs to the scholar; but Camoens was more of the soldier than Spenser, and Spenser more of the scholar than Camoens. Both were unhappy in their attachments; each left his native country in the vain hope of fortune, and ever sighed to return; each was unanimously acclaimed in his lifetime as the greatest poet his country had yet produced, yet neither reaped the reward that such an acknowledgment should have brought; and each, if tradition might be implicitly trusted, died in absolute want. Each early conceived the design of exalting his country by an immortal poem, and each owes the greater part of his fame to its more or less complete accomplishment; while at the same time each gained



such eminence in lyric and pastoral that, had every line of his epic perished he would still have been a very considerable poet. In character Spenser is more amiable and attractive than the irascible and frequently wrong-headed Portuguese ; while the latter occasionally reveals a tragic grandeur of soul to which Spenser could never have attained. Spenser was essentially a man of refinement, of culture, of urbanity ; a chivalrous idealist, a Platonist by force of natural affinity : his transference to the stormy arena of Ireland was a misfortune for poetry as well as for the poet. Representative of the age of Elizabeth as he was, he would have been even more at home in the age of Victoria.

Keats, complimenting his friend Cowden Clarke on his acquaintance with Spenser, describes him as "a forester deep in thy midmost trees." The phrase is felicitous, for Spenser's poetical domain resembles a forest more nearly than it resembles a champaign, or a mountain, or an ocean. Its attributes are neither those of well-ordered culture nor of wild sublimity ; rather those of rich woodland, full of beautiful products and beautiful creatures, yet withal pathless and diffi-



"The Faerie  
Queene"

The Red Cross Knight

From the 1598 edition of "The Faerie Queene"

cult of access in many parts, and not to be comprehended at one view from any quarter. Add that, like a forest, with its secular growths and growths of yesterday, it is at once old and young—young with its fresh poetical spirit, old with its obsolete diction and general aspect of a bygone age. If we are to have a guide through this enchanted region we must find a trusty one, for perhaps no other great poem with a great purpose so conceals this purpose as *The Faerie Queene*. It is, in the first place, unfinished, and the argument must be sought outside the poem. Homer gives us the subject

of the *Iliad* in the very first line: "Sing, O Muse, the wrath of Achilles, son of Peleus" Milton, like a stately argosy, is some time in getting under way; yet the first five lines of *Paradise Lost* explain the purpose of the poem. But though Spenser gives a general definition of the theme of *The Faerie Queene*, "Fierce wars and faithful lives shall moralise my song," he nowhere in the poem discloses the reason, apart from the delightful exercise of the imagination, which made him create so many chivalrous champions and beautiful ladies, and uncouth giants and unshapely monsters, and wily enchanters and alluring sorceresses, and devise such an interminable series of adventures.

*Elizabeth as  
Gloriana*

We shall not find a more trustworthy guide than Dean Church, who, putting into few words Spenser's own somewhat confused explanation in his letter to Raleigh, tells us that "he meant to shadow forth, under the figure of twelve knights and in their various exploits, the characteristics of a gentleman or noble person fashioned in virtuous and gentle discipline. He took his machinery from the popular legends about King Arthur, and his heads of moral philosophy from the current Aristotelian Catalogue of the Schools." The *Faerie Queene* herself, says Spenser, is meant "for glory in general intention," but in particular for Elizabeth, and Faery Land for her kingdom. Remote, therefore, as Spenser's verse seems from ordinary human affairs, he emulated Virgil, who, seeming merely to tell a romantic story, has expressed the innermost idea of Roman nationality as it was expressed in the best minds of Rome in the Augustan age. But this Spenser has not achieved, principally because his allegory is so loose and so devoid of obvious connection with the personage whose pre-eminence it professes to shadow forth. How can it be otherwise when the august Gloriana, Queen of Faerie, the alleged centre and animating spirit of the action, does not appear in the poem at all? It begins.

A gentle knight was pricking in the plain,  
Y-cladd in mighty arms and silver shield

In the third stanza we learn that this champion is bound upon a great adventure:

That greatest Gloriana to him gave,  
That greatest glorious Queen of Faeryland.

This is all; nothing to show that Gloriana is Elizabeth. When, therefore, we by-and-by encounter other allegorical figures, we have no means of identifying them. Knowing so little of Gloriana, we could not, but for the above-mentioned letter to Raleigh, have been sure that the *Faerie Queene's* enemies represented actual antagonists of Elizabeth. They seem just such uncomely and uncanny creatures as the romancer provides for the knight-errant. With the clue afforded by the letter we may, indeed, finding that the enchanter Archimago

Told of saints and Popes, and evermore  
He strewed an Ave Mary after and before,

surmise in him no other than the Pope himself. And we can then see that the witch Duessa, beautiful in semblance, foul in fact, the ruin of the young

knights whom she seduces, is the very counterfeit presentment of Mary Queen of Scots as she appeared to a loyal subject of Elizabeth. But these figures are brought into no vital connection with Gloriana, who comes to light regularly in the dedication to each successive book, and then goes to sleep like old Barbarossa in the Kyffhäuser Mountain. She is made a heroine on far too easy terms; she should have been what Una is, a living, moving, suffering personage. It is, no doubt, perfectly true that the respect due to his sovereign would have prevented Spenser from exhibiting Elizabeth in any perilous or equivocal situation, and hence that he cannot, as a courtier, do his part as a poet. But whatever the cause, the effect is the same; his poem's relation to the times is not sufficiently distinct; hence, with all its innumerable beauties, it is not an epic.

Spenser has succeeded better in another part of his plan—the embodiment of the perfect gentleman. Unfortunately, the exhibition is not complete. Twelve special virtues, each deemed essential to this character, were to have been set forth in a corresponding number of books, each divided into twelve cantos. The portion completed embraces Holiness, Temperance, Chastity, Friendship, Justice, and Courtesy; a fragment of the lost or unfinished book of Constancy is also preserved. The plan is more consistently carried out in the first books than in their successors, in which, as Dean Church says,

"the poem becomes an elastic framework, into which Spenser puts whatever interests him and tempts him to composition." One effect of this is to bring the poem nearer to actual life. We still need a clue, but if we compare it with contemporary history we shall see that Spenser's head is becoming fuller of what is going on around him; and, writing as he is in Ireland, alone with his own fancies, he gives himself the rein, and introduces contemporary transactions with less disguise than he thought needful in the earlier books. The Legend of Justice, in the fifth book, for instance, shadows forth the pacification of Ireland by Lord Grey de Wilton, figured by the hero Artegall. Mary Stuart reappears as Florimel and Radekund; Elizabeth, though still addressed as Gloriana, is Britomart, and several other characters besides. These things should be known, else part of the poet's intention escapes us, and he seems a mere melodious voice. We must clearly understand that in reading him we are not only drawing from a fountain of fancy, imagination, and music,



Mary, Queen of Scots

From "*Inscriptiones Historice Regum Scotorum*" 1602

*The ideal  
Gentleman in  
"The Faerie  
Queene"*

but are conversing with the soldier, courtier, and man of affairs, the loyal servant of his idolised Queen, the friend of Leicester, Sidney, and Raleigh, himself a sentinel on one of the most vulnerable frontiers of the empire, the half-conquered and quarter-civilised province of Munster—anything rather than the idle singer of an empty day whom he so much resembles at first sight. We are further imbibing the spirit and seeing with the eyes of a Puritan, although one of most gentle type, a supporter of Leicester's "No peace with Spain" policy, in strictness of morals and in the culture of high scholarship a forerunner of Milton, whose place he would in the main have filled could they have exchanged epochs

*Spenser and  
his Con-  
temporal rivals*

As a poet Spenser need fear no comparison with his great contemporaries Tasso and Camoens; but the one point where they have most conspicuously succeeded is that where he has most conspicuously failed—he has not, like them, achieved an epic. If not quite an epic poet, however, he is much more than a mere romancer; his place is rather with the special objects of his emulation, Boiardo and Ariosto. These poets, Ariosto at least, have undoubtedly succeeded better in their object of glorifying the petty House of Este than Spenser has in glorifying the great Elizabeth, yet this is not entirely gain. Ariosto perpetually dispels the glamour of his romance by dragging in his patrons, and his panegyric wears the aspect of adulation. His real advantages over Spenser are the point and clearness of his style, and his great superiority as a narrator. In invention the two poets are much upon a par, but in moral dignity Spenser stands on a far higher plane. Ariosto was indifferent to the great wave of new light and new truth which even in his day was breaking upon the world, but which in Spenser's had mounted far higher, and so upbears him that his blemishes seem little more than drift and wrack lightly borne on the crest of the billow. He owes much to the noble stanza which he elaborated from the hints of the Italians—a stanza which allows of the most majestic volume of sound and the greatest variety of musical effects of any in our language, and so far beyond the resources of other languages that even the German translator, whom the Sanskrit *sloka* does not daunt, commonly puts the reader off with an inferior substitute. Even when the external form is successfully copied, the inner melody of stanzas like these must be the despair of every translator:

Eftsoons they heard a most melodious sound  
Of all that mote delight a dainty ear,  
Such as attonce might not on living ground  
Save in this Paradise, be heard elsewhere  
Right hard it was for wight which did it hear  
To rede what manner musie that mote be;  
For all that pleasing is to living ear  
Was there consorted in one harmony,  
Birds, voices, instruments, winds, waters, all agree.

The joyous birds, shrouded in cheerful shade,  
Their notes unto the voice attempered sweet;  
The angelical soft trembling voices made  
To the instruments divine response meet;

Siqua habes nova de statu illorū Dnōrū mī rōstus  
remaneatū p̄sentim Dm̄ Bauonē Gf̄corūsis mīto  
rescribere si illi nō deliquit mī famōp̄m sūp̄re illi  
favendū sentio : multos habet aduersarios sed utinā  
illi tam fideles sūt Dn̄m p̄i ut ego illum dū fuit

Tua excellentis Vetus amicus

Maximilianus Caspellen

Document in the handwriting of Edmund Spenser

Copia vera !

Edm. Spenser.



The silver sounding instruments did meet  
 With the bass murmur of the waters' fall;  
 The waters' fall with difference discrete,  
 Now soft, now loud, unto the wind did call;  
 The gentle warbling wind low answeréd to all.

In one respect Spenser's example might have been injurious—his abuse of the poet's privilege of enriching his mother tongue. "In my opinion," says Kirke in his preface to *The Shepherd's Calendar*, "it is one special praise of many which are due to this poet that he hath laboured to restore, as to their rightful heritage, such good and natural English words as have been long time out of use, and almost clean disherited." The doctrine of the survival of the fittest was not well understood in Spenser's day, and he went so far not only in vain attempts at restitution but in needless innovation as to raise up formidable difficulties both for himself and his reader, augmented by the obstinate conservatism of his editors, who, if they could not meddle with his *adverbs* and *singults*, might at least have modernised his orthography. It is indeed proof of his greatness that neither an unfinished poem, nor a faulty plan, nor an uninterpreted allegory, nor monotony of incident, nor inability to depict character, nor obsolete language, nor antiquated spelling, should have kept him out of the hands of the lovers of poetry. But he has not, like Shakespeare and Milton, been able to subjugate those who do not love poetry for its own sake.

*His obsolete  
 language and  
 novel words*

Spenser's amplitude of detail, partly cause and partly consequence of his stanza, renders it difficult to illustrate him by quotation, for his choicest passages are long. The two following, briefer than usual with him, afford magnificently contrasted examples of splendid description, the one all gloom the other all glory:

*His specta-  
 beauties*

#### THE HOUSE OF PRIDE

High above all a cloth of State was spread,  
 And a rich throne, as bright as sunny Day;  
 On which there sate, most brave embellished  
 With royal robes and gorgeous array,  
 A maiden Queen that shone as Titan's ray  
 In glistening gold and peerless precious stone;  
 Yet her bright blazing beauty did assay  
 To dim the brightness of her glorious throne  
 As envying herself that too exceeding shone:

Exceeding shone, like Phæbus' fairest child,  
 That did presume his father's fiery wain,  
 And flaming mouths of steeds, unwonted wilde,  
 Through highest heaven with weaker hand to rein:  
 Proud of such glory and advancement vain,  
 While flashing beams do dim his feeble eyen,  
 He leaves the welkin way most beaten plain,  
 And rapt with whirling wheels, inflames the skye,  
 With fire not made to burn, but fairly for to shine.

So proud she shined in her princely state,  
 Looking to heaven, for earth she did disdain,

And sitting high for lowly she did hate ·  
 Lo! underneath her scornful feet was lain  
 A dreadful Dragon with a hideous train,  
 And in her hand she held a mirror bright,  
 Wherein her face she often viewéd fair,  
 And in her self-loved semblance took delight,  
 For she was wondrous fair, as any living wight.

#### THE CAVE OF MAMMON

The house's form within was rude and strong,  
 Like an huge cave hewn out of rocky clift,  
 From whose rough vault the ragged breaches hong,  
 Embossed with massy gold of glorious gift,  
 And with rich metal loaded every rift,  
 That heavy run they did seem to threat,  
 And over them Arachne high did lift  
 Her cunning web, and spread her subtle net,  
 Ennrap in foulé smoke and clouds more black than jet.

Both roof and floor and walls were all of gold,  
 But overgrown with dust and old decay,  
 And hid in darkness, that none could behold  
 The view thereof, for light of cheerful day  
 Did never in that house itself display  
 But a faint shadow of uncertain light,  
 Such as a lamp, whose life does fade away,  
 Or as the Moon, clothéd with cloudy night,  
 Does show to him that walks in fear and sad affright.

In all that room was nothing to be seen  
 But huge great iron chests, and coffers strong,  
 All barred with double bands, that none could ween  
 Them to efforce by violence or wrong  
 On every side they placéd were along,  
 But all the ground with skulls was scatteréd  
 And dead men's bones, which round about were flong;  
 Whose lives, it seeméd, whilom there were shed,  
 And their vile carcasses now left unburiéd

The following is a good example of Spenser's more soft and luxurious style of description, and his power of allying pageantry with poetry :

Soon as she up out of her deadly fit  
 Arose, she bade her chariot to be brought,  
 And all her sisters that with her did sit  
 Bade eke attonce their chariots to be sought  
 Tho full of bitter grief and pensive thought,  
 She to her wagon clomb, clomb all the rest,  
 And forth together went with sorrow fraught.  
 The waves, obedient to their behest,  
 Them yielded ready passage, and their rage surceased.

Great Neptune stood amazéd at their sight,  
 While on his broad round back they softly slid,  
 And eke himself mourned at their mournful plight,  
 Yet wist not what their wailing meant, yet did,



For great compassion of their sorrow bid  
 His mighty waters to them buxom be ;  
 Eftsoons the roaring billows still abid,  
 And all the grisly monsters of the sea  
 Stood gaping at their gait, and wondered them to see.

A team of dolphins rangéd in array  
 Drew the smooth chariot of sad Cymocent :  
 They were all taught by Tritons to obey  
 To the long reins at her commandement :  
 As swift as swallows on the waves they went,  
 That their broad flaggy fins no foam did rear,  
 Nor bubbling roundel they behind them sent.  
 The rest of other fishes drawn were,  
 Which with their finny oars the swelling sea did shear.

Soon as they bin arrived upon the brim  
 Of the rich strand, their chariots they forlore,  
 And let their tamed fishes softly swim  
 Along the margent of the foamy shore,  
 Lest they their fins should bruise, and surbate sore  
 Their tender feet upon the stony ground :  
 And coming to the place where all in gore  
 And crudely blood enwallowéd they found  
 The luckless Marinell lying in deadly swound.

In this beautiful piece of pageantry there are few features unborrowed from the general repertory of poets : but Spenser excels all by his consummate ease of handling, as though he saw Proteus and Triton not by glimpses, as Wordsworth was fain to do, but habitually : and by the singular fitness of his ample, liquid, booming verse to describe the sea and the things of the sea. He neither attains the sublime nor astonishes by originality of observation or intensity of description, but lavishes beauties of the strictly poetical order as from a horn of plenty. His effects are broad and general ; he disregards minutiae, and cannot sustain searching criticism. He makes Neptune still the waves for the nymphs, forgetting that they had already done this for themselves. He could not well have found epithets less descriptive of dolphins' fins than "broad" and "flaggy" ; and the nymphs' solicitude lest the fishes should hurt their feet seems, to say the least, superfluous.

The most considerable of Spenser's minor works, and the first that gained him reputation, is his *Shepherd's Calendar*. This was published in 1579, under the modest pseudonym "Immerito," and under the agis of "E.K.," probably Edward Kirke, who provides the twelve eclogues, each corresponding to a month in the year, with pithy arguments, and in a diplomatic preface, which is also a model of good writing and sound criticism, "smooths the raven down" of the crabbed Gabriel Harvey, who is soothed by an appeal "to pluck out of the hateful darkness those so many excellent English poems" of his own. The extraordinary success of these pastorals might seem surprising if it were not remembered that three of them are satires on the corruptions of the clergy, and if the state of English poetry in their day were not taken into account. Surrey and Wyatt had written excellent lyrics, but no long poem of merit—

scarcely even of high aim—had been produced by any native poet south of the Tweed since the days of Chaucer. It was much to show that such work was possible, and at that time the pastoral was an admitted convention. The present age demands reality, and as peasants are better portrayed in prose than in verse, George Sand and Thomas Hardy have dethroned Theocritus, and the metrical pastoral only survives as a *jeu d'esprit* or representation of idyllic existence in an imaginary paradise or an imaginary past. Spenser's contemporaries found nothing obsolete or tiresome in his machinery; he was, indeed, better equipped than most by being actually provided with a faithless or obdurate mistress. Even so, not much of his work is really devoted to the plainings of unsuccessful love. His shepherds discourse rather of politics

### January.



From "The Shepherd's Calendar" 1597

than theology, and he even extols Bacchus above Venus as a source of poetical inspiration :

All otherwise the state of Poet stands ;  
 For lordly love is such a tyrant fell,  
 That where he rules all power he doth expel ;  
 The vaunted verse a vacant head demands,  
 Ne wont with crabbed care the Muses dwell :  
 Unwisely weaves, that takes two webs in hands.

Whoever casts to compass weighty prize,  
 And thinks to throw out thundering words of threat,  
 Let pour in lavish cups and thrifty bits of meat,  
 For Bacchus' fruit is friend to Phœbus wise ;  
 And when with wine the brain begins to sweat,  
 The numbers flow as fast as spring doth rise.

Thou kenst not, Percy, how the rhyme should rage,  
 O ! if my temples were distained with wine,  
 And girt in garlands of wild ivy twine,  
 How I could rear the Muse on stately stage,  
 And teach her tread aloft in buskin fine,  
 With quaint Bellona in her equipage !

This seems to evince Spenser's impatience to devote his full powers to *The Faerie Queene*, which we know that he was contemplating. Notwithstanding the humility of the conclusion (imitated from Statius), where he disclaims rivalry not only with Chaucer but with Piers Plowman, he evidently did not want a high and just confidence in himself, though he modestly expresses it through the mouth of another :

Colin, to hear thy rhymes and rondelays,  
Which thou wert wont on wasteful hills to sing,  
I more delight than lark in summer days,  
Whose echo made the neighbour groves to ring,

## November.



From "The Shepherd's Calendar" 1597

And taught the birds, which in the lower spring  
Did shroud in shady leaves from sunny rays,  
Frame to thy song their cheerful chirruping,  
Or hold their peace for shame of thy sweet lays.

I saw Calliope with Muses mo,  
Soon as thy oaten pipe began to sound,  
Their ivory lutes and tamburins forego,  
And from the fountains where they sat around  
Run after hastily thy silver sound ;  
But, when they came where thou thy skill didst show,  
They drew aback, as half with shame confound,  
Shepherd, to see them in their art outgo.

Here is the germ of the Spenserian stanza, and the same rich volume of melody streams forth whenever Spenser writes in decasyllabics. The language has become more opulent and flexible than when the rhyme royal represented the *ne plus ultra* of the metrical art, and enhanced power of verbal music only corresponds with enhanced power of verbal expression. In presence of these gains, we may well overlook the artificiality of pseudo-pastoral mannerism, not more conspicuous in Spenser than in the rest of the successors of Theocritus.

*Spenser's  
nuptial odes*

An artificial style, indeed, suited Spenser Like Ariosto, but unlike Camoens; unlike also his great successor Milton, he is unvisited by any snatch of song. It can never be said of him that he sings as the bird sings. He can marshal grand harmonies, but is never himself enthralled by a simple spontaneous melody. He would have found it easier to create Ariel than to write Ariel's song. This is remarkable, as no period of English literature has been so rich in light melodious carols as the age of Elizabeth and James, but he is entirely unaffected by the pervading atmosphere. He is at his very best as a lyric poet in his two nuptial odes, the *Epithalamion* on his own marriage, the *Prothalamion* on the double wedding at Essex House in 1596, when the nature of the subject invited strains voluminous, intricate, and majestic. These are like grand performances on the organ, in which all less sonorous instruments, if such there be, are swallowed up and lost. The *Epithalamion* in particular is a performance of the class of Milton's *At a Solemn Music* and Dryden's great pair of odes. If nowhere quite attaining the splendour of Milton's ode or of the opening stanza of the monody on Mistress Killigrew, the poetic flight is longer than the first and more equable than the second, if it impresses the mind less powerfully than *Alexander's Feast*, the cause is Dryden's not wholly legitimate employment of objective description and scene-painting. Neither Milton nor Dryden appears indebted to it, but it has manifestly influenced another great English ode, Tennyson's on the death of the Duke of Wellington. There is, perhaps, no poem of equal extent in the language of such level merit where the poet, rising from the first to a lofty height, remains poised so long on steady wing without appreciable rise or descent. Two stanzas, nevertheless, must content us:

Now is my love all ready forth to come  
 Let all the virgins therefore well await,  
 And ye, fresh boys, that tend upon her groom,  
 Prepare yourselves, for he is coming straight.  
 Set all your things in seemly good array,  
 Fit for so joyful day,  
 The joyfullest day that ever Sun did see  
 Fair Sun! show forth thy favourable ray,  
 And let thy lifefull heat not lervent be  
 For fear of burning her sunshiny face,  
 Her beauty to disgrace  
 O fairest Phœbus! father of the Muse!  
 If ever I did honour thee aright,  
 Or sing the thing that mote thy mind delight,  
 Do not thy servant's simple boon refuse,  
 But let this day, let this one day, be mine,  
 Let all the rest be thine  
 Then I thy sovereign praises loud will sing,  
 That all the woods shall answer, and their echo ring

Hark! how the minstrels 'gin to shrill aloud  
 Their merry music that resounds from far  
 The pipe, the tabor and the trembling croud,<sup>1</sup>  
 That well agree withouten breach or jar,

<sup>1</sup> Fiddle.

But most all the damsels do delight  
 When they their timbrels smite,  
 And thereunto do dance and carol sweet,  
 That all the senses they do ravish quite ;  
 The whiles the boys run up and down the street  
 Crying aloud with strong, confused noise  
 As if it were one voice.  
 Hymen ! io Hymen ! Hymen ! they do shout ,  
 That even to the heavens their shouting shrill  
 Doth reach, and all the firmament doth fill ;  
 To which the people standing all about,  
 As in approbance, do thereto applaud,  
 And loud advance her laud ;  
 And ever more they Hymen ! Hymen ! sing  
 That all the woods them answer, and their echo ring.

These stately strophes would not have existed without Italian precedents ; but the form is not precisely that of any Italian *canzone*, and the thoughts are entirely Spenser's.

Among Spenser's other minor poems, perhaps the most remarkable are his *The Hymns*, especially the first two, addressed respectively to Love and Beauty, poems such as Plato might have written if he had persevered in his youthful endeavours to win renown as a poet. The first celebrates the ancient myth of Love the Demiurgus, the orderer and fashioner of the chaotic universe :

For ere this world's still moving mighty mass  
 Out of great Chaos' ugly prison crept,  
 In which his goodly face long hidden was  
 From heaven's view, and in deep darkness kept,  
 Love, that had now long time securely slept  
 In Venus' lap, unarmed then and naked,  
 Gan rear his head, by Clotho being waked.  
  
 And taking to him wings of his own heat,  
 Kindled at first from heaven's life-giving fire,  
 He gan to move out of his idle seat ;  
 Weakly at first, but after with desire  
 Lifted aloft, he gan to mount up higher,  
 And, like fresh eagle, made his hardy flight  
 Through all that great wide waste, yet wanting light.

The second hymn is no less Platonic, praising ideal Beauty, the only true reality :

How vainly then do idle wits invent  
 That beauty is nought else but mixture made  
 Of colours fair, and goodly temperament  
 Of pure complexions that shall quickly fade  
 And pass away, like to a summer's shade ;  
 Or that it is but comely composition  
 Of parts well measured with meek disposition. . . .

But ah ! believe me, there is more than so,  
 That works such wonders in the minds of men ;  
 I, that have often proved, too well it know,

And whoso list the like assays to ken,  
 Shall find by trial, and confess it then,  
 That Beauty is not, as fond men misdeem,  
 An outward show of things that only seem :

For that same goodly hue of white and red  
 With which the cheeks are sprinkled, shall decay ;  
 And those sweet rosy leaves, so fairly spread  
 Upon the lips, shall fade and fall away  
 To that they were, e'en to corrupted clay .  
 That golden wire, those sparkling stars so bright,  
 Shall turn to dust, and lose their goodly light.

But that fair lamp, from whose celestial ray  
 That light proceeds which kindleth lovers' fire,  
 Shall never be extinguished nor decay ,  
 But, when the vital spirits do expire,  
 Unto her native planet shall retire,  
 For it is heavenly born and cannot die,  
 Being a parcel of the purest sky

*"The Tears  
 of the Muses"*

*The Tears of the Muses* contains much fine and even splendid writing, but, put forth as it was when Marlowe was flowering and Shakespeare blossoming, and Spenser himself had just published with universal applause the first part of *The Faerie Queene*, it would appear ridiculous but for the strong probability that it was an early composition dragged forth to eke out the volume of *Complaints*, in which it appeared in 1591. Spenser's Muses are indeed doleful creatures ! There seems some hope of Urania, who observes that, although the study of astronomy is now greatly neglected,

I feed on sweet contentment of my thought ,

but "the contented mind" seems far from being "a continual feast" in her case :

With that she wept and wailed so piteously  
 As if her eyes had been two springing wells,  
 And all the rest, her sorrow to supply,

[As if it needed any supplement !]

Did throw forth shrieks and cries and dreary yells

*Elegies and  
 minor pieces*

A performance eight times repeated. There is no good reason for connecting the poem with Shakespeare's *Thrice Three Muses Mourning for the death Of Learning, late deceased in beggary*.

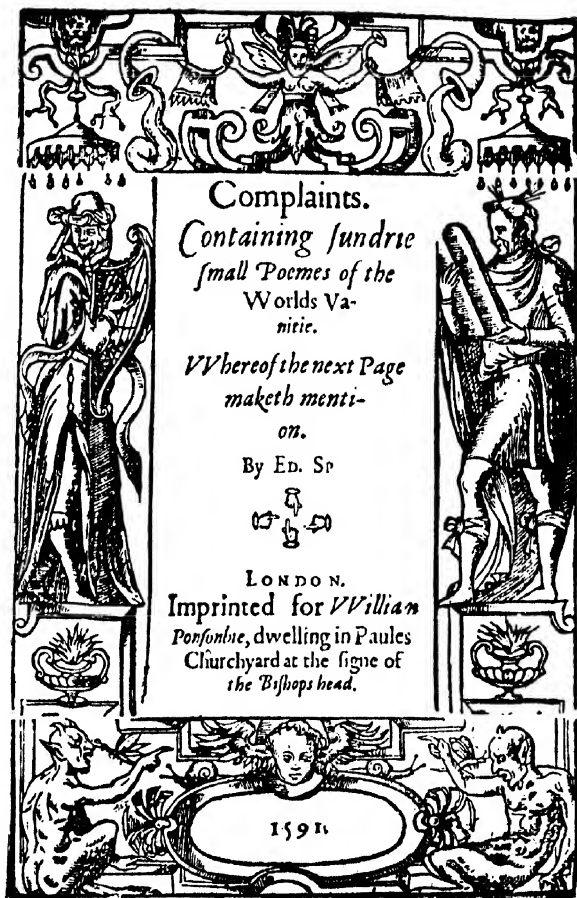
Spenser's turn for elegy was more happily exercised in his *Daphnida*, an elegy on the death of Lady Gorges, and *Astrophel*, a tribute to Sidney. *Colin Clout's Come Home Again* is eminent for fine marine painting, and affords interesting glimpses of the author and his circle, especially Raleigh, "the Shepherd of the Ocean," to whose persuasion he attributes his visit to England. *Mmopotmos*, a poem on the fate of a butterfly, is an elegant

trifle, and *Mother Hubbard's Tale*, a piece in the spirit of Chaucer, evinces a genuine talent for satire, and is a masterly example of the heroic couplet. Spenser's sonnets (*Amoretti*), composed while he was wooing the second object of his affections, who became his wife, are neither like those of the Italian masters' embodiments of a single thought carved and chiselled to perfection, nor streams of overmastering emotion like the best of Shakespeare's. The metrical form is a compromise with the difficulties of the Italian, and, while more artificial than Shakespeare's, lacks his fluent strength. Spenser's genius was, no doubt, too exuberant for the severe restraint of the sonnet, and the glory of naturalising the Italian form was reserved for the more condensed and pregnant Milton. Yet, though his sonnets generally want the needful weight and concentration, few are devoid of charm :

Like as the culver on the  
baréd bough  
Sits mourning for the ab-  
sence of her mate,  
And in her songs sends many  
a wishful vow  
For his return that seems  
to linger late;  
So I alone, now left dis-  
consolate,  
Mourn to myself the absence  
of my love,  
And wandering here and  
there all desolate,  
Seek with my plaints to match  
that mournful dove.

Ne joy of aught that under heaven doth hove  
Can comfort me, but her own joyous sight;  
Whose sweet aspect both God and man can move  
In her unspotted pleance to delight.  
Dark is my day whiles her fair light I miss,  
And dead my life that wants such lovely bliss.

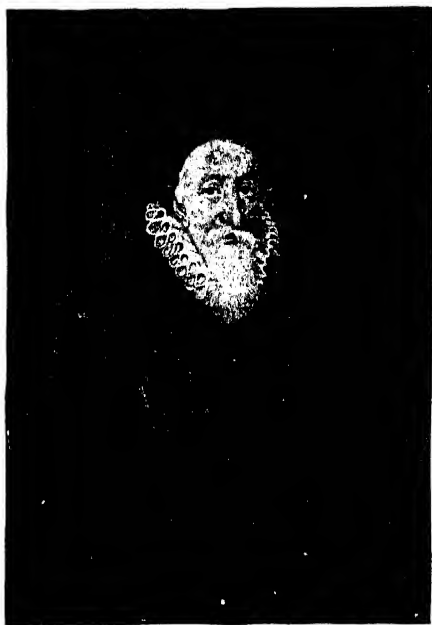
Spenser's translations are not the least remarkable of his works. His fecundity of diction would have unfitted him for literal translation, but renders him admirable in paraphrase, whether of the dignified rhetoric of



Title-page of the "Complaints," 1591

Du Bellay's *Ruins of Rome* or the lively mock heroic of the pseudo-Virgilian *Culex*, though one wishes that among the liberties he took with this had been the liberty of abbreviating it. The anonymous author of *Britain's Ida* has been defrauded of the reputation due to a pretty poem, but at the same time has vastly multiplied the number of his readers by the freak of an editor who thought fit to publish it under the name of Spenser, among whose works it has continued to find a place.

Upon a general review of Spenser's achievement, and regarding poetry simply as poetry, without regard to the truths of which it may be made the vehicle,



Thomas Sackville, Earl of Dorset

we cannot dissent from Professor Saintsbury's judgment that, "putting Shakespeare aside, only two English poets can challenge Spenser for the primacy: these are Milton and Shelley." If we deem, as we do, that the challenge can be successfully sustained in both instances, the ground is, as appears to us, Spenser's deficiency in the highest and rarest endowment of the poet, sublimity. Milton almost dwells in the region of the sublime, Shelley treads it frequently, Spenser enters it but seldom. The conception of the two cantos on Mutability appended to *The Faerie Queene* is undoubtedly sublime, but its sublimity does not extend to the verbal expression, as would have been the case with Shelley or Milton. Nor does

Spenser possess any considerable power of delineating tragic emotion. These deductions made, there is scarcely any strictly poetical excellence which it is possible to refuse him.

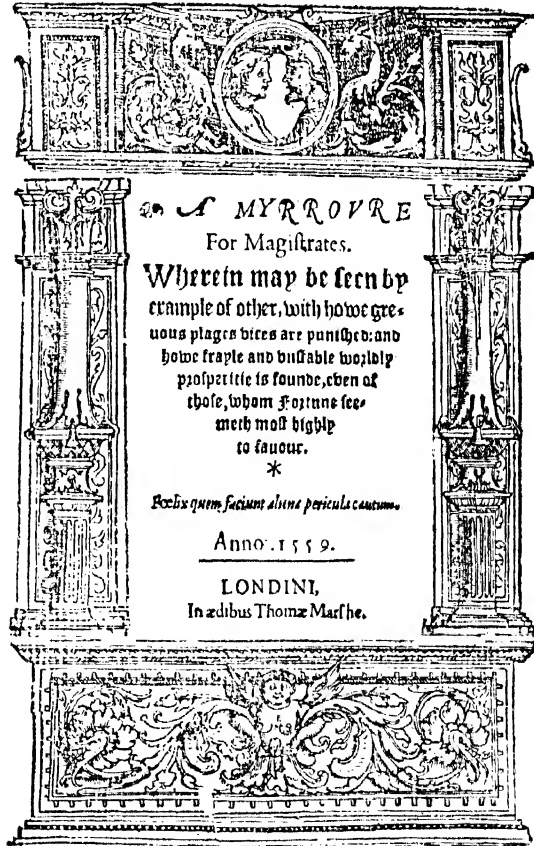
Spenser's appearance in the domain of English poetry is most striking from its suddenness and its immediate recognition as the phenomenon of which all who were jealous of the honour of English literature had been rather desirous than expectant. It came just at the time when Sidney was with reason deploring the barrenness of the poetical field in England, and the instant acclamation of Spenser as the man who had taken away that reproach, and again given England a place among the lands of the Muses, is creditable to the intelligence and patriotism of the time. It may almost be said that night covers all performances in English poetry from the deaths of Surrey and Wyatt to the publication of *The Shepherd's Calendar* in 1579; yet upon careful retrospective scrutiny we may discover that the continuity, pointed out with admirable perception by Shelley as one of the main characteristics of English



poetry, had not ceased; and that, in particular, Spenser had had one predecessor who wanted nothing but perseverance to have enacted Varius to his Virgil. This was THOMAS SACKVILLE, Earl of Dorset (1536-1608). He was the son of Sir Richard Sackville, a supple and dexterous courtier, who, making it his chief business to stand well with the powers that were, was always filling some lucrative office, but deserves well of literature for having urged Ascham to write the *Schoolmaster*. His son

also had a genius for official life, but the statesman did not extinguish the poet until he had initiated two remarkable works, which he allowed to be completed by inferior hands. About 1557 he formed the idea, partly inspired by Virgil and Dante, partly by Boccaccio and Lydgate, of a visitation of the realms of the shades, where the poet should hold discourse with the most tragic figures of English history. He wrote the induction and the dialogue with Richard III.'s Buckingham, "with," says Dean Church, "a pathetic majesty, a genuine sympathy for the precariousness of greatness, which seem a prelude to the Elizabethan drama." The task was then handed over to GEORGE FERRERS and WILLIAM BALDWIN, two poets about Court who as minstrels were mere journeymen. The former,

however, was thought to have done the State some service by composing interludes and masques to divert Edward VI.'s grief for the execution of the Protector Somerset; and the latter, in general a persistent ballad-monger, has been recently ascertained to be the author of a witty satire, *Beware the Cat*. They worked at Sackville's project according to contract, and published it as *A Mirror for Magistrates* (1559-1561). Sackville, meanwhile, had made an epoch-marking contribution to English literature by his share in the first English tragedy in blank verse, *Gorboduc*, acted at the Inner Temple on Twelfth Night, 1561, sixteen days before another epoch-marking



Title-page of "A Mirror for Magistrates," 1559

The first edition. The enlarged edition, including the Induction appeared in 1563

event, the birth of Francis Bacon. This remarkable production will be noticed along with dramatic literature. As the first three acts are the composition of Thomas Norton it is, perhaps, more reasonable to assign the original conception to him than to Sackville, but Sackville's part is much the more poetical. After its representation he bade adieu to poetry altogether, and was for the rest of his prosperous life the busy, useful, second-class statesman, upon whom a costly duty like the entertainment of the Cardinal de Châtillon, or a disagreeable one like the announcement of her condemnation to Mary Queen of Scots, could always be imposed; who discharged diplomatic missions efficiently, and submitted to be disowned when it suited his royal mistress's purpose; who enriched himself without suspicion of corruption or extortion, and worked his way up to the great place of Treasurer, which was conferred upon him after the death of Burghley, and which he retained until his death. He was also Chancellor of the University of Oxford, and a benefactor to the Bodleian Library. The splendid Tudor mansion, Knole Park, Sevenoaks, was built by him, and continues in the possession of his family.

Both as a narrative poet and a dramatist Sackville exerted a considerable influence upon Elizabethan poetry, and he must have gained a great name if his life had been devoted to literature. He shows no token of lyrical faculty, and the heaviness of his blank verse in *Gorboduc* renders it very doubtful whether he possessed any, but he wields the rhyme royal with perfect mastery; and the vigour of his allegorical impersonations reveals a truly poetical imagination. His great fault is insistence; he fairly wrings his subject out, and, straining his own imagination to the uttermost, leaves no scope to his reader's. All his subjects are taken from the gate of hell, it must remain a question whether the same poetical power which there stood him in such stead might have served him equally well to depict human action and the joy of life. The following is his impersonation of Old Age, one of a gallery of equally striking pictures of the doleful figures which the poet encounters ere he enters Charon's bark under the guidance of Sorrow.

And next, in order sad, Old Age we found,  
His beard all hoar, his eyes hollow and blind,  
With drooping cheer still poring on the ground,  
As on the place where Nature had assigned  
To rest, when that the Sisters had untwined  
His vital thread, and ended with their knife  
The fleeting course of fast declining life

There heard we him with broke and hollow plaint  
Rue with himself his end approaching fast,  
And all for nought his wretched mind torment  
With sweet remembrance of his pleasures past,  
And fresh delights of lusty youth forewast<sup>1</sup>,  
Recounting which, how would he sob and shriek,  
And to be young again of Jove beseeke!

<sup>1</sup> Wasted.

But an the cruel fates so fixed be  
 That time prepast can not return again,  
 This one request of Jove yet prayéd he,  
 That in such withered plight and wretched pain  
 As eld, accompanied with his loathsome train,  
 Had brought on him, all were it woe and grief,  
 He might a while yet linger forth his life,  
  
 And not so soon descend into the pit,  
 Where Death, when he the mortal corpse hast slain,  
 With reckless hand in grave doth cover it,  
 Thereafter never to enjoy again  
 The gladsome light, but, in the ground y-lain,  
 In depth of darkness waste and wear to nought,  
 As he had ne'er into the world been brought.  
  
 But who had seen him sobbing how he stood  
 Unto himself, and how he would bemoan  
 His youth forepast, as though it brought him good  
 To talk of youth, all were his youth foregone,  
 He would have mused, and marvelled much whereon  
 This wretched Age should life desire so fain,  
 And knows full well life doth but length his pain.  
  
 Crookbacked he was, tooth-shaken, and blear-eyed ;  
 Went on three feet, and sometimes crept on four.  
 With old lame bones that rattled by his side,  
 His scalp all pitted, and he with age forlore,  
 His withered fist still knocking at Death's door,  
 Fumbling and drivelling as he draws his breath,  
 For brief, the shape and messenger of Death.

The mastery both of verbal and metrical expression in a youth of twenty-one are certainly very remarkable. If Queen Elizabeth had possessed a nice discernment in poetry she would have discovered Sackville's fitness for the official laureateship for which Spenser was too great and the other contemporary poets too small ; and we should have possessed a series of historical poems of much poetical merit and even greater historical value.

Sackville was a born poet, diverted from poetry by the pursuits of statesmanship. GEORGE GASCOIGNE (1525 ? -1577) is, on the other hand, an unusual instance of a poet who wrote, or at least published, nothing until past forty. He was the son of a Bedfordshire knight, and a descendant of the Chief Justice who long, though it seems undeservedly, enjoyed the renown of having laid a Prince of Wales by the heels. Choosing the Prince rather than the ancestor for his model, Gascoigne, a gay young Templar, got himself disinherited for his dissolute courses, and spent his life under the pressure of debt, which he only partially relieved by marrying a widow in middle life. He was afterwards returned to Parliament for Midhurst, but, perhaps to frustrate the immunity from arrest which he would thus have obtained, was prevented from taking his seat by the machinations of his adversaries, who accused him, among other heinous offences, of being "a common rhymers." To avoid persecution he went abroad, served with distinction in the Low Countries, was taken prisoner, and returned with *dulce bellum inexpertis* on

George  
Gascoigne

his lips as the sum of his military experience. His services, it is likely, recommended him to the favour of Leicester, who employed him in writing and devising shows for the festivities at Kenilworth. Many of these are included in a volume entitled *The Princely Pleasures at the Court of Kenilworth*.



George Gascoigne presenting his Book to the Queen

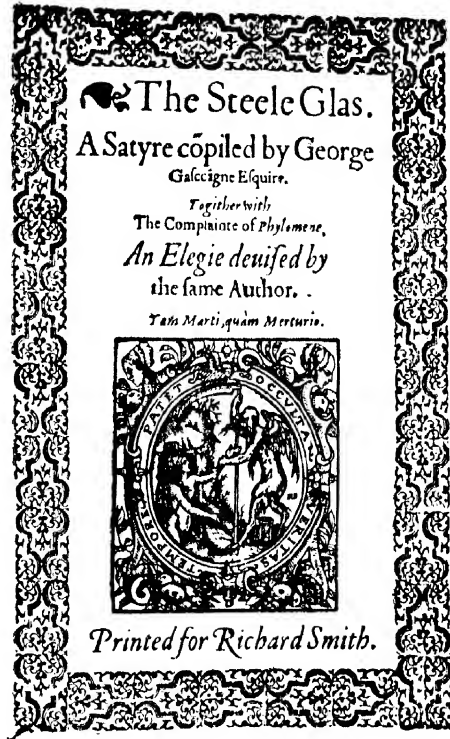
*British Museum Reg. MS. 18, A. 48*

published in 1576. His prose tale, *Hemctes the Hermit*, was recited before Queen Elizabeth, and translated by himself into three languages. Only the year before his death he produced his best known work, the satire entitled *The Steel Glass*. The title is derived from the notion that a mirror of steel reflects objects more faithfully than a mirror of glass, a doctrine most comfort-

able to English manufacturers, who at that period could make the former but not the latter. He died in October 1577.

Gascoigne was certainly not an *uncommon* rhymers, but he holds an important place in Elizabethan literature as a pioneer in many departments. "His *Supposes*, after Ariosto," says Mr. Sidney Lee, "is the earliest extant comedy in English prose; his *Jocasta*, after Euripides, is the second earliest tragedy in blank verse; his *Steel Glass* is probably the earliest regular verse satire; his *Certain Notes of Instruction concerning the Making of Verse* is the earliest English critical essay; his *Adventures of Ferdinando Jeronimi*, translated from Bandello, one of the earliest known Italian tales in English prose." If he had lived later and caught the contagion of enthusiasm from Campion and his contemporaries, he might have been a lyrical poet of distinction. There is an airy grace in the following stanzas, although the allegory somewhat halts, the poet having professed himself to be condemned by Craft and Falsehood, who should have no place in the Court of Beauty, and admitting the justice of his sentence after all:

Down then I fell upon my knee,  
All flat before Dame Beauty's face,  
And cried, "Good Lady, pardon me,  
Which here appeal unto your grace.  
You know, if I have been untrue,  
It was in too much praising you.



Title-page of "The Steel Glass," 1576

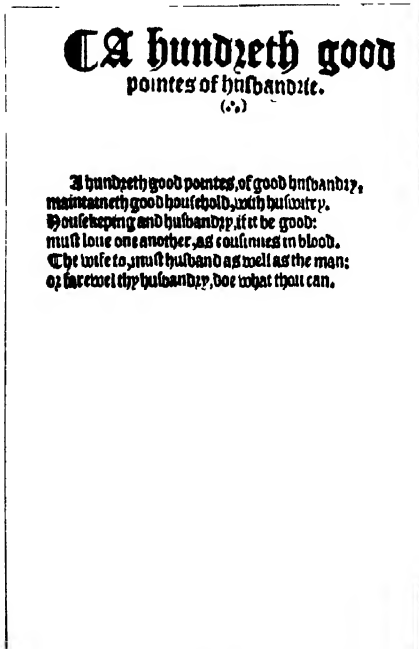
"And though this iudge doth make such haste  
To shed with shame my guiltless blood;  
Yet let your pity first be placed  
To save the man that meant you good.  
So shall you show yourself a Queen,  
And I may be your servant seen."

Quoth Beauty, "Well, because I guess  
What thou dost mean henceforth to flee;  
Although thy faults deserve no less  
Than Justice here hath judg'd thee;  
Wilt thou be bound to stint all strife  
And be true prisoner all thy life?"

"Yea, Madam," quoth I, "that I shall;  
Lo Faith and Truth my sureties."

'Why, then,' quoth she, 'come when I call  
 I ask no better warrantise"  
 Thus am I Beauty's bounden thrall,  
 At her command when she doth call.

The time for elegant imitations of the Georgics was not yet, but THOMAS TUSSER (1524?–1580), without intending it, produced a fair English approximation to the more ancient *Works and Days* of Hesiod. Having been a chorister at St Paul's, he entered the service of Baron Paget of Baudesert as musician, married, set up as a farmer in Suffolk, failed, went back to music,



Title-page of Tusser's "Hundred Good Points of Husbandry"

and returned to farming, and after many vicissitudes died in a debtor's prison, being "more skilful in all than thriving in any vocation." He was, however, no charlatan; his simple and straightforward precepts derive from experience, and he well merits Southey's character of him as "a good, honest, homely, useful old rhymers." His *Hundred Good Points of Husbandry* (1557) were expanded in successive editions, until by 1573 they became five hundred, united to as many of "good housewifery." Their practical worth has always been admitted, and although there is nothing of poetry in them but the rhyme, their swing, terseness, and pithiness are literary qualities not always found in more pretentious performances.

Tusser deserves mention from the peculiarity of his subject. Some

writers of higher power but more conventional themes and methods would scarcely have merited notice if they had not faintly broken the too general pause of song which prevailed during the first years of Elizabeth. Perhaps the most remarkable, certainly the most voluminous, of these is THOMAS CHURCHYARD (1520?–1604), whose poems are chiefly important in so far as they illustrate contemporary transactions in Ireland and Flanders, and interesting in so far as they record incidents in his own adventurous life. A minstrel by profession, he is now and then a poet by chance. GEORGE TURBERVILLE (1540?–1610) was esteemed by his contemporaries as a writer on hawking, and as the translator of the *Eclogues* of Baptista Mantuanus but is chiefly interesting now from his curious metrical descriptions of Russian manners and customs as observed by him during the mission of Thomas Randolph (1568–1569), to which he was secretary. The printed volume in which they were collected is lost, but three are preserved by Hakluyt

Turberville was an accomplished gentleman, and is justly praised by a later writer for having "broken the ice for our quainter poets that now write." BARNABE GOOGE (1540-1594) made very popular translations of the *Zodiacus Vitæ* of Marcellus Palingenius and *The Reign of Antichrist* of Thomas Naogeorgus, and produced some original verse of no great merit. Nine books of the *Æneid* were rendered by THOMAS PHAER (1510-1560), and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* by ARTHUR GOLDING (1535-1605?). It seems strange

*Minor Trans-  
lations*

## THE Worthines of Wales:

*Wherein are more then a thousand fower all things  
rehearsed: some set out in prose to the pleasure of the  
Reader, and with such varietie of verse for the  
beautifying of the Book, as no doubt shall  
delight thousands to vnderstand.*

*Which worke is enterrained with many wonders and right strange  
matter to consider of: All the Which labour and deuises  
drawne forth and set out by Thomas Church-  
yard, to the glorie of God, and honour of  
his Prince and Countrey.*

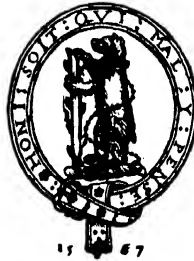


Imprinted at London, by G.  
Robinson for Thomas Cadman.  
1587.

Title-page of Churchyard's  
"Worthiness of Wales." 1587

## The. xv. Bookes of P. Ouidius Naso; entytuled Metamorphosis, translated oute of Latin into English meeter, by Ar- thur Golding Gentleman, A worke very pleasaunt and delectable.

With skill, heed, and iudgement, this worke must be read,  
For else to the Reader it standes in small stead.



Imprynted at London, by  
Willyam Seres.

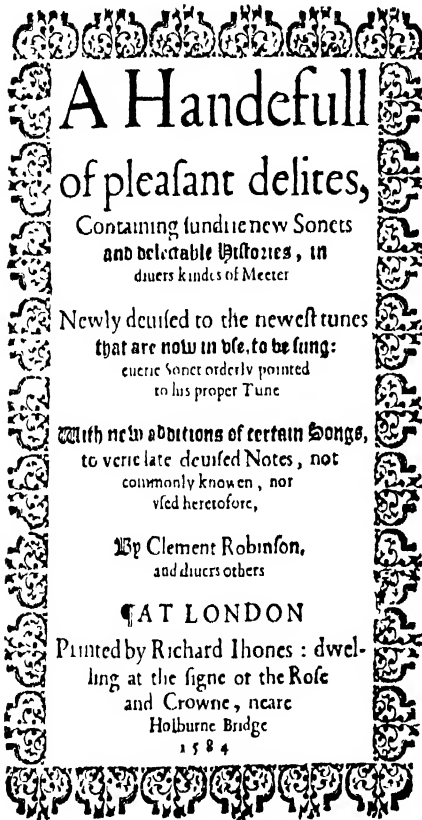
Title-page of Golding's translation of  
Ovid's "Metamorphoses," 1567

that this piece of work, excellent for its time, should have proceeded from a Puritan and a translator of Calvin.

The year 1557, memorable poetically for the composition of the Induction to *A Mirror for Magistrates*, was also distinguished by the publication of the first asylum for English fugitive verse. *Tottel's Miscellany*, in emulation of the volumes in which Lodovico Dolce had long been enshrining the minor productions of the most clamorously vocal period of Italian poetry, gathered up, under the editorship of Nicholas Grimald, the waifs and strays of a poor era. Some aid, nevertheless, was lent by gleaning from the remains of Surrey and Wyatt. The next important anthology, *The Paradise of Dainty Devices* (1576), indicates progress, but affords no token of the surprising development of lyrical poetry immediately at hand. This may be dated from 1584, when a superior anthology appeared under the editorship of CLEMENT ROBINSON,

and ground was broken in another direction by the songs unbedded in Lyly's plays, *Alexander and Campaspe* and *Sappho and Phaon*. Within four years mere the silent bowers of the English Muses were resounding with melodious song. A more startling transition is not recorded in literary history than this almost unique instance of the lyrical inspiration occasionally vouchsafed to the individual being suddenly poured out upon a nation. No art, no study, no conjuncture of favourable circumstances could have brought it about ;

*Anthologies*



Title-page of Robinson's "Handefull of pleasaunt delities," 1584

no "taking thought" could have added this cubit to the stature of English poetry.

The lyrists of the time may be divided into four classes: (1) Poetical artists, like Watson and Breton, who cultivate poetry systematically, and are sometimes lifted high above their ordinary selves, (2) Dramatists and novelists, like Lyly and Lodge, whose poetry is kept subordinate to their professional pursuits, (3) Men of the world, like Sir Edward Dyer, who occasionally find poetry an apter medium than prose to record visitations of serious thought, (4) Mere singers of tuneful snatches, a class not created but greatly fostered by the almost universal study of music as a branch of liberal education. The latter class will be best reserved for the period of James, when it attained its highest development. Before speaking of the others, we may pause for a moment upon almost the only lyrical composition of the

interval between Surrey and Sidney which has obtained general popularity—the very beautiful *Renewing of Love* of RICHARD EDWARDS (1523?–1566), a professional musician and Court playwright, several of whose songs have reached us. It begins:

In going to my naked bed, as one that would have slept,  
I heard a wife sing to her child, that long before had wept  
She sighed sore, and sung full sweet, to bring the babe to rest,  
That would not cease, but cried still, in sucking at her breast  
She was full weary of her watch, and grieved with her child  
She rocked it, and rated it, till that on her it smiled  
Then did she say, "Now have I found this proverb true to prove,  
The falling out of faithful friends renewing is of love."



Then took I paper, pen, and ink, this proverb for to write,  
 In register for to remain of such a worthy wight.  
 As she proceeded thus in song unto her little brat,  
 Much matter uttered she of weight in place where as she sat ;  
 And provéd plain there was no beast, nor creature having life,  
 Could well be known to live in love without discord and strife.  
 Then kisséd she her little babe, and sware by God above,  
 The falling out of faithful friends renewing is of love.

Of the writers who cultivated poetry as a profession, the oldest was the best. NICHOLAS BRETON will more properly be considered when we reach the Jacobean period, but of his early lyrics it may here be said that their excessive fluency injured his reputation; greatly admired by his contemporaries, they were soon almost entirely forgotten. Yet one lyric of most admirable pathos and truth to nature is attributed to Breton, although, appearing in an anthology which has contributions from other hands, it is not certainly from his pen :

## SWEET I ULLABY

Come, little babe, come, silly soul,  
 Thy father's shame, thy mother's grief,  
 Born as I doubt to all our dole,  
 And to thyself unhappy chief :  
 Sing lullaby, and lap it warm,  
 Poor soul that thinks no creature harm.

Thou little think'st and less dost know  
 The cause of this thy mother's moan ;  
 Thou want'st the wit to wail her woe,  
 And I myself am all alone ;  
 Why dost thou weep ? why dost thou wail ?  
 And know'st not yet what thou dost ail.

Come, little wretch—ah, silly heart !  
 Mine only joy, what can I more ?  
 If there be any wrong they smart,  
 That may the destinies implore :  
 'Twas I, I say, against my will,  
 I wail the time, but be thou still.

And dost thou smile ? O thy sweet face !  
 Would God himself He thee might see !  
 No doubt thou would'st soon purchase grace,  
 I know right well, for thee and me :  
 But come to mother, babe, and play,  
 For father false is fled away.

Sweet boy, if it be fortune's chance  
 Thy father home again to send,  
 If Death do strike me with his lance,  
 Yet may'st thou me to him commend :  
 If any ask thy mother's name,  
 Tell him by love she purchased blame.

Then will his gentle heart soon yield :  
 I know him of a noble mind :  
 Although a lion in the field,  
 A lamb in town thou shalt him find :

Ask blessing, babe, be not afraid ;  
His sugared words have me betrayed.

Then may'st thou joy and be right glad ;  
Although in woe I seem to moan,  
Thy father is no rascal lad,  
A noble youth of blood and bone :  
His glancing looks, if he once smile,  
Right honest women may beguile.

Come, little boy, and rock asleep ;  
Sing lullaby and be thou still ;  
I that can do nought else but weep,  
Will sit by thee and wail my fill,  
God bless my babe, and lullaby  
From this thy father's quality.

Thomas  
Watson



Title page of Watson's "Hekatompathia"

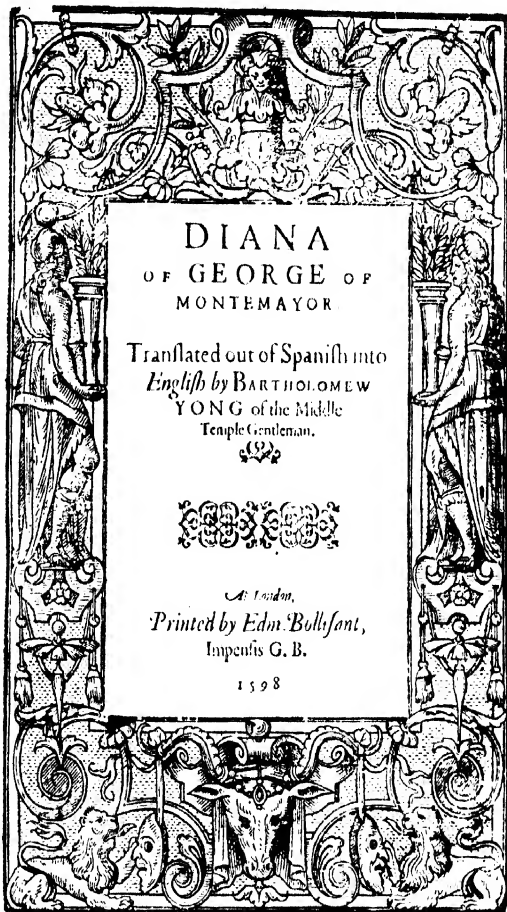
cycles of which Sidney's *Astrophel*, Spenser's *Amoretti*, and Shakespeare's *Sonnets* are memorable examples. The question how far these cycles were artificial exercises and how far expressions of real feeling is one of great interest, but needs to be propounded again with each successive author. There is no reason to think that the sonnet meant much more to Watson than a literary exercise; a large proportion of his pieces are translations or imitations from the French or Italian. Translation into Latin verse was his forte, and this gift, rare among Englishmen of his time, was successfully exercised upon Tasso's *Aminta*. He was a gentleman-author, an amateur of music, and especially patronised by Walsingham, whose favour he had gained in Paris.

Although BARTHOLOMEW YONG is principally known as a translator of Italian and Spanish prose, he has a claim to a place among poets from

his twenty-four contributions to *England's Helicon* (1600), even though these are mostly translations. His best known work is his rendering of the *Diana of Montemayor*, which may have been seen in MS. by Shakespeare when he wrote *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*.

HENRY CONSTABLE (1562-1613), a man of good family, became a Roman Catholic early in life, and spent many years in Paris, where he played an ambiguous part as agent, perhaps spy, for Pope and Queen at the same time. In 1603 he was imprisoned in the Tower, but was liberated in the following year, and died at Liège in 1613. His *Diana*, a collection of sonnets, was published in 1592, and republished in 1594 with additional poems, not all of which are his. In 1600 he appears as a contributor of pastoral poems to the celebrated anthology, *England's Helicon*. These, though diffuse, evince genuine rustic feeling, and entitle him to a good position among the minor lyrists of his day. Nor are his sonnets devoid of merit. It must be set to the credit of a dubious character to have been the friend of Sidney in early youth, and to have celebrated the publication of Sidney's *Apology for Poetry* in a sonnet inspired by real emotion:

Henry  
Constable



Title-page of Bartholomew Yong's "Diana," 1598

Give pardon, blessed soul, to my bold cries,  
 If they, importune, interrupt thy song,  
 Which now with joyful notes thou sing'st among  
 The angel choristers of the heavenly skies.  
 Give pardon, eke, sweet soul, to my slow cries,  
 That, since I saw thee, now it is so long;  
 And yet the tears that unto thee belong  
 To thee as yet they did not sacrifice.  
 I did not know that thou wert dead before,  
 I did not feel the grief I did sustain;  
 The greater stroke astonisheth the more,  
 Astonishment takes from us sense of pain.  
 I stood amazed when others' tears begun,  
 And now begin to weep when they have done.

Sonnet-cycles prevailed exceedingly from 1593 to 1596, during which period volumes of sonnets were published by poets of such repute as Chapman, Drayton, and Barnfield, and a number of minor minstrels, among whom BARNABE BARNES holds the first place. After this date the fashion ceased, though there is reason to think that the finest of Shakespeare's sonnets were yet to come. Perhaps the final blow was dealt by the publication in 1597 of three hundred and twenty-six spiritual sonnets at one fell swoop by HENRY LOK, who next year is found unsuccessfully suing for the appointment of

keeper of the Queen's bears and mastiffs. Barnes (1569?–1609), a son of the Bishop of Durham, is a sonneteer of real merit. He wrote two volumes of poetry, one spiritual, the other secular; and *The Devil's Charter*, a tragedy on the history of Pope Alexander VI. Some of his sonnets are almost modern in thought and expression:

Ah! sweet Content, where is thy mild abode?

Is it with shepherds and light-hearted swains,

Which sing upon the downs and pipe abroad,

Tending their flocks and cattle on the plains?

Ah, sweet Content, where dost thou safely rest?

In heaven, with angels that the praises sing

Of Him who made, and rules at his behest,

The minds and hearts of every living thing?

Ah, sweet Content, where doth thine harbour hold?

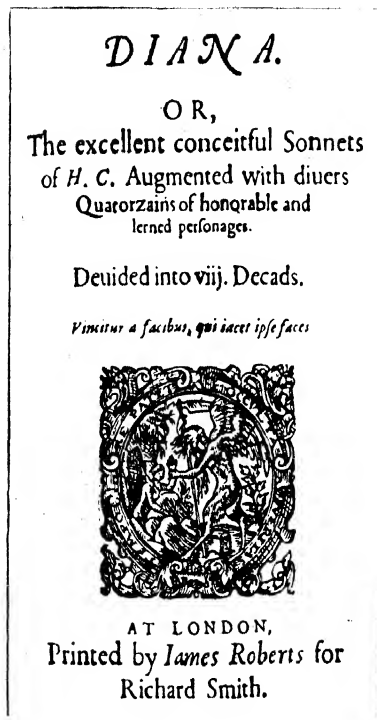
Is it in churches with religious men

Which please the gods with prayers manifold,

And in their studies meditate it then?

Whether thou dost in earth or heaven appear,

Be where thou wilt, thou wilt not harbour here.



Title-page of Constable's "Diana"

Much of Barnes's amorous poetry in his *Parthenophil* seems trembling on the verge of excellence, but seldom attains it. He is one of the few English poets who have essayed the difficult sestet stanza, which he has converted into a lyrical measure by making it octosyllabic.

ROBERT SOUTHWELL (1561?–1595) has obtained a higher place in English poetry than strictly his due, on account of the compassion excited by his fate. Belonging to a Roman Catholic family, he was sent to the Continent for his education, and returned to England ambitious for the crown of martyrdom, which, in the opinion of his co-religionists, he obtained by his execution for

treason in 1595. That he was guilty of treason is unquestionable; the fault, however, was not his, but that of Pope Pius V., who, by excommunicating and deposing Elizabeth, had rendered every Roman Catholic ecclesiastic an emissary of conspiracy and rebellion. Every such ecclesiastic was bound, by his allegiance to the Pope, to tell his flock that their Queen was an usurper—an Athaliah awaiting a Jehoiada. The conduct of the English Government was that prescribed by the circumstances, and exactly the same as that which any other Government would have adopted in its place. This in no respect impairs the honour due to Southwell for his single-minded enthusiasm, or for his courage and constancy. Apart from the man, the poet is interesting on two grounds—the rhetorical merit of much of his verse, and the first indications of the far-fetched metaphysical conceit which so marred the poetry of Donne and Crashaw and Cowley in the next century. He has, like these writers, great fertility of conception; ideas throng upon him, and he entertains and arrays all with indiscriminate hospitality. When writing simply and naturally he can be very pleasing, as in the following lines:



Robert Southwell

*From the portrait in "St. Peter's Complaint," 1630*

The loppéd tree in time may grow again;  
 Most naked plants renew both fruit and flower;  
 The sorest wight may find release of pain;  
 The driest soil suck in some moistening shower.  
 Times go by turns and chances change by course,  
 From foul to fair, from better hap to worse.

The sea of Fortune doth not ever flow;  
 She draws her favours to the lowest ebb;  
 Her time hath equal times to come and go;  
 Her loom doth weave the fine and coarsest web.  
 No joy so great but runneth to an end,  
 No hap so hard but may in fine amend.

Not always fall of leaf nor ever spring,  
 No endless night yet not eternal day;  
 The saddest birds a season find to sing,  
 The roughest storm a calm may soon allay.  
 Thus with succeeding turns God tempereth all,  
 That man may hope to rise yet fear to fall.

Fortune has been most unkind to RICHARD BARNFIELD (1574-1627) in

depriving him for nearly three centuries of the honour due to his two best poems, but most kind in bestowing this on no less a person than Shakespeare. These are the beautiful lines on the song of the nightingale, beginning, "As it fell upon a day," and the sonnet to R. L., "If music and sweet poetry agree," both of which, being printed in *The Passionate Pilgrim*, were ascribed to

Shakespeare, and only restored to Barnfield upon their discovery in a copy of his then almost unknown writings. The so-called ode is not very Shakespearean, but the authorship of the sonnet would hardly have been questioned upon internal evidence alone :

If Music and sweet Poetry  
agree,  
As they must needs, the  
sister and the brother,  
Then must the love be great  
'twixt thee and me,  
Because thou lov'st the  
one, and I the other  
Dowland to thee is dear,  
whose heavenly touch  
Upon the lute doth ravish  
human sense,  
Spenser to me, whose deep  
concert is such  
As, passing all concert, needs  
no defence  
Thou lov'st to hear the  
sweet melodious sound  
That Phœbus' lute, the  
queen of music, makes,  
And I in deep delight am  
chiefly drowned  
When as himself to singing  
he betakes.  
One god is god of both, as  
poets feign;  
One knight loves both, and  
both in thee remain.

# ENGLANDS HELICON.

Casti placent superis,  
pura cum velle venite,  
Et mambus puris  
fumite fontis aquam.



AT LONDON  
Printed by I. R. for Iohn Flasket, and are  
to be sold in Paules Church-yard, at the signe  
of the Beare. 1600.

Title-page of "England's Helicon," 1600

Barnfield certainly did not encumber himself with poetical baggage for the ascent of Parnassus. The greater part of his slender store of verse was produced by the age of twenty, which may excuse a questionable morality which was probably nothing worse than boyish affectation. Here, as everywhere, he manifests pure poetical qualities, and it was a loss to English literature when, perhaps upon inheriting a patrimonial estate, he quitted the excellent literary

society he had enjoyed in London for his native Staffordshire, where he remained obstinately silent until his death in 1627.

The lives and general personal and literary characters of Lyly, Greene, and Lodge have been treated elsewhere, and in this place it is only necessary to speak of them as lyric poets. In our estimation, Lodge is the truest lyricist among them. The best lyrics of Lyly and Greene are not, strictly speaking, songs, but little poems, musical indeed, but whose length is rather conditioned by the subject than the melody. Lyly's famous song of Apelles on Campaspe is a notable instance. Rather than quote anything so universally known, we give the no less beautiful "Nightingale Song":

*Lyrical  
Poetry:  
Lyly, Greene,  
Lodge*

What bird so sings, yet so does wail?  
O 'tis the ravished nightingale.  
Jug, jug, jug, jug, teren! she cries,  
And still her woes at midnight rise,  
Brave prick song! Who is't now we hear?  
None but the lark so shrill and clear;  
How at heaven's gates she claps her wings!  
The morn not waking till she sings.  
Hark, hark, with what a pretty throat  
Poor robin redbreast tunes his note!  
Hark how the jolly cuckoos sing  
Cuckoo! to welcome in the spring.  
Cuckoo! to weloome in the spring.

Greene's verses are frequently steeped in the richest hues of poetry, but want something of the easy spontaneity of the lyric. They are rarely snatches of simple melody, but patterns of sonorous stateliness, such as might have passed for examples of an Elizabethan Keats. If they are to be regarded as songs, they are songs for the concert chamber:

Sweet are the thoughts that savour of content;  
The quiet mind is richer than a crown;  
Sweet are the nights in careless slumber spent;  
The poor estate scorns Fortune's angry frown.  
Such sweet content, such minds, such sleep, such bliss,  
Beggars enjoy, when princes oft do miss.

The homely house that harbours quiet rest;  
The cottage that affords no pride nor care;  
The mean that 'grees with country music best;  
The sweet consort of mirth and music's fare;  
Obscured life sets down a type of bliss:  
A mind content both crown and kingdom is.

As Greene reminds us of Keats, so Lodge sometimes reminds us of Blake. It is difficult to think that Blake had no knowledge of "Love's Wantonness" when he wrote "How sweet I roamed from field to field":

Love guards the roses of thy lips,  
And flies about them like a bee;  
If I approach he forward skips,  
And if I kiss he stingeth me.

Love in thine eyes doth build his bower,  
 And sleeps within their pretty shrine,  
 And if I look the boy will hover,  
 And from their orbs shoot shafts divine.

Love works thy heart within his fire,  
 And in my tears doth form the same ;  
 And if I tempt it will retire,  
 And of my plants doth make a game.

Love, let me cull her choicest flowers,  
 And pity me, and calm her eye,  
 Make soft her heart, dissolve her lowers,  
 Then will I praise thy deity.

The same daring imagination is shown in the gorgeous "Description of Rosalynd," a rare example of continuous hyperbole never transgressing the limits allowable to impassioned feeling. The less-known "Hamadryad's Song" is an instance of the power of genuine lyrical emotion to exalt what without it would be mere commonplace :

Pluck the fruit and taste the pleasure,  
 Youthful Lordings, of delight !  
 While occasion gives you seizure,  
 Feed your fancies and your sight !  
 After death, when you are gone,  
 Joy and Pleasure is there none.

Here on earth no thing is stable ;  
 Fortune's changes well are known.  
 While as Youth doth them enable,  
 Let your seeds of joy be sown.  
 After death, when you are gone,  
 Joy and Pleasure is there none.

Feast it freely with your lovers :  
 Blithe and wanton sweets do fade.  
 Whilst that lively Cupid hovers  
 Round about this lovely shade.  
 Sport it freely one to one,  
 After death is pleasure none.

Now the pleasant Spring allureth,  
 And both place and time invite.  
 Out ! Alas ! What heart endureth  
 To disclaim his sweet delight ?  
 After death, when we are gone,  
 Joy and Pleasure is there none.

*The Earl of  
 Oxford*

As already mentioned, another class of lyrical poets was formed by those men of society who occasionally turned aside from pleasure or business to the solace of poetry. After Raleigh, EDWARD DE VERE, Earl of Oxford (1550-1604), is the most perfect type of the poetical courtier. So great was his brilliancy as an ornament of Elizabeth's Court, and so strong his position as the son-in-law of Burghley, that nothing but his perverse wrong-headedness could have prevented his rising to the highest dignities of the State ; but neither his



gallant bearing nor his accomplishments of mind and person could counterweigh the bad impression of his endless escapades and broils; he lost all consideration, and died in retirement. It is singular that much of the fugitive poetry which he contributed to the anthologies of the day should be of a religious character. As a lyrist he has considerable merit, and is commended as a dramatist, but his plays are lost. The best-known of his poems, and deservedly so, is his graceful colloquy with Fond Desire:

Come hither, shepherd's swain.  
Sir, what do ye require?  
I pray thee show to me thy name.  
My name is Fond Desire.

Where wert thou born, Desire?  
In pride and pomp of May.  
By whom, sweet boy, wert thou begot?  
By Self-conceit, men say.

Tell me who was thy nurse?  
Fresh youth, in sugared joy.  
What was thy meat and daily food?  
Sad sighs and great annoy.

What hadst thou then to drink?  
Unfeignéd lovers' tears.  
What cradle wert thou rockéd in?  
In hope devoid of fears.

What lulled thee to thy sleep?  
Sweet thoughts which liked one best.  
And where is now thy dwelling-place?  
In gentle hearts I rest.

What thing doth please thee most?  
To gaze on beauty still.  
Whom dost thou think to be thy foe?  
Disdain of my good will.

Doth company displease?  
It doth in many a one.  
Where would Desire then choose to be?  
He loves to muse alone.

Will ever age or death  
Bring thee unto decay?  
No, no. Desire both lives and dies  
A thousand times a day.

Then, Fond Desire, farewell,  
Thou art no mate for me.  
I should be loth methinks to dwell,  
With such an one as thee.



Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford

*From an engraving of the portrait at Welbeck*

Sir EDWARD DYER (*d.* 1607) was in so far the opposite of Oxford as to be a man of weight and character, and the friend, legatee, and pall-bearer of Philip Sidney, whom Oxford wished to assassinate. Like Oxford, however, he was subject to disastrous eclipses of the Royal favour, which he is said to have on one occasion regained by threatening to go into a consumption.

*Sir Edward  
Dyer*

"And hereupon her majesty hath forgiven him" Like Oxford, also, he withdrew much from observation in the latter part of his life, and died in embarrassed circumstances, which may have been owing to his reported partiality to alchemy. He was an early friend of Spenser, a man of high culture, and the author of several poems, one which would have made him famous if his name had been more generally associated with it. It is hardly necessary to reproduce so well-known a poem as *My Mind to me a Kingdom is*, but one stanza may be quoted to point out the reflection of it in a still better known poem of Shirley's :

Some weigh their pleasure by their lust,  
 Their wisdom by their rage of will,  
 Their treasure is their only trust;  
 A cloaked craft their store of skill.  
 But all the pleasure that I find  
 Is to maintain a quiet mind.

Shirley :

Some men with swords may reap the field,  
 And plant fresh laurels where they kill;  
 But their strong nerves at last must yield,  
 They tame but one another still.

The attribution of a translation of six idylls of Theocritus to Dyer seems extremely uncertain.

William  
 Warner

Three poets of the time stand altogether aloof from the lyric—WILLIAM WARNER, ABRAHAM FRAUNCE, and THOMAS EDWARDS. Of these, Warner obtained much the highest reputation in his own day, being actually paralleled with Spenser. He was probably indebted for this unmerited distinction to the national character of his principal work, *Albion's England*, first published in 1586, and enlarged by successive continuations down to the author's own day. It may be compared in design to Ovid's *Fasts*, being a versified history of England, fabulous in many parts then deemed true, with an intermixture of unquestionable legend. Warner's significance in English literary history is derived less from his sensible and manly, but not very poetical epic, than from his peculiar position as the only considerable poet of his day who was entirely unaffected by Italian example, and wrote in lines of fourteen syllables as though Surrey, Wyatt, and their followers had never existed. The best parts of his poem are the episodes, one of which, *Argentile and Curan*, has been frequently republished and imitated. He was by profession an attorney, and died at Amwell in 1609.

Fraunce and  
 Edwards

Abraham Fraunce (1560 ? -1633 ?) is only remarkable for his persistence in the thankless task of composing in hexameters. Thomas Edwards (fl. 1595), not to be confounded with the author of *The Renewing of Love*, whose *Cephalus and Procris*, and *Narcissus*, have lately been retrieved from a unique copy, is a writer of a much higher order, who might have attained distinction if he had continued to write. At the date of his publication his command of language was evidently imperfect, and hence he is continually obscure, but not with the obscurity of affectation. We are continually tantalised

with glimpses of an almost Keatsian beauty, which never become definite. Nothing is known of Edwards's life; he seems to speak of himself as a poor scholar, and must have had some connection with the family of Argall, eminent notaries, to a member of which his volume is dedicated.

With the important exception of the Border Ballads, Scotch poetry, so flourishing at the beginning of the century, all but died away during its course. Many of the occasional pieces written under Mary Stuart and James VI. have considerable merit, but this merit is seldom or never of a poetical order. The poetical ballads and satires, for example, of ROBERT SEMPILL (1530?–1595) have both vigour and historical value, but can hardly be regarded as poetry. Apart from the curious play of "Philotus," the only regular poems of the time of any importance are those of ALEXANDER HUME (1560?–1609), minister of Logie, near Stirling, a son of Baron Polwarth. The chief characteristics of his poems, which have been recently collected, are a dignified stateliness of manner and a keen eye for the broader effects of natural scenery. The former is especially evinced in his *Triumph of the Lord*, a poem on the discomfiture of the Armada, the latter in his *Description of the Day Estivall*, too long even for the longest day, but a glowing representation of the pomp of summer:

The ample heaven of fabric sure  
In cleanness doth surpass  
The crystal and the silver pure  
Or clearest polished glass.

The time so tranquil is and still  
That nowhere shall ye find,  
Save in a high and barren hill,  
An air of peeping wind.

All trees and simples, great and small,  
That balmy leaf do bear,

## THE FIRST and Second parts of ALBIONS ENG- LAND.

The former revised and corrected, and  
the latter newly continued and added. Containing  
an Historiall Map of the same Island: profecuted from  
the times, & Actes, and Labors of Saturne, Iupiter, Hercules,  
and Æneas: Originallies of the Britons, and English-  
men, and Occasion of the Britons their first arrival in Albi-  
on. Profecuting the same Historie unto the Tribute to  
the Romanes, Entree of the Saxones, Inuasion  
by the Danes, Conquest by the Normaines,  
Restauracion of the Royall English  
blood, Discontent and vniou of  
the two Linages Lancaller  
and Yorke.

With Historiall Intermixtures, Inuention, and Varietie:  
profitably, briefly, and pleasantly performed in  
Verse and Prose by William Warner.



Imprinted at London by Thomas Orwin, for Tho-  
mas Cudman, dwelling at the great North-doore of Saint  
Pauls Church at the figure of the Bible. 1589.

Title-page of Warner's "Albion's England," 1589

Sempill and  
Hume

Than they were painted on a wall  
No more they move or stir.

Calm is the deep and purple sea,  
Yea, smoother than the sand,  
The waves that weltering wont to be  
Are stable like the land.

So silent is the cessile<sup>1</sup> air,  
That every cry and call  
The hills and dales and forest fair  
Again repeat them all.

*The Border  
Minstrelsy*

The principal cause of the poetical lethargy of Scotland was, no doubt, the absorption of the intellect of the nation in political and theological contests. The disquiet which prevailed on the Scotch and English border was of another sort, and encouraged poetry by the continued succession of picturesque and tragic incident. The great bulk of the Border Minstrelsy probably came into being during this century, although the precise date of any ballad can rarely be fixed, and almost all have undergone modification, not always for the worse, at the hands of successive generations of reciters and transcribers. They usually turn upon some contemporary incident impressive to the popular imagination. The majority are deeds of violence or treachery, provoking pity or indignation, which sometimes takes a sarcastic turn. Their dramatic force is frequently intense, and their artlessness has all the effect of the most consummate art. A much smaller class deal with the supernatural. Of these *The Demon Lover* is the finest, but is so well known that we pass it by for the eerie tale of *The Wife of Usher's Well*, all the more impressive from its fragmentary character. It has been used to complete the better known *Clerk of Oxenford*.

#### THE WIFE OF USHER'S WELL

There lived a wife at Usher's Well,  
And a wealthy wife was she,  
She had three stout and stalwart sons,  
And sent them o'er the sea.

They hadna been a week from her,  
A week but barely ane,  
When word came to the careline wife  
That her three sons were gane.

They hadna been a week from her,  
A week but barely three,  
When word came to the carline wife  
•That her sons she'd never see.

"I wish the wind may never cease,  
Nor fishes in the flood,  
Till my three sons come hame to me  
In earthly flesh and blood."

It fell about the Martinmas,  
When nights are long and mirk,

<sup>1</sup> Yielding.

The carline wife's three sons came hame,  
And their hats were o' the birk.

It neither grew in syke nor ditch,  
Nor yet in any sheugh ;<sup>1</sup>  
But at the gates of Paradise  
That birk grew fair eneugh.

" Blow up the fire, my maidens !  
Bring water from the well !  
For a' my house shall feast this night,  
Since my three sons are well."

And she has made them to a bed,  
She's made it large and wide  
And she's ta'en her mantle her about  
Sat down at the bed-side.

Up then crew the red, red cock,  
And up and crew the grey ;  
The eldest to the youngest said,  
" 'Tis time we were away."

The cock he hadna crawled but once,  
And clapped his wings at a',  
When the youngest to the eldest said,  
" Brother, we must awa'."

" The cock doth crawl, the day doth dawn,  
The channerin' worm doth chide ;  
Gin we be missed out of our place,  
O sair pain we maun bide.

" Fare ye weel, my mother dear !  
Fareweel to barn and byre ;  
And fare ye weel, the bonny lass  
That kindles my mother's fire."

Poetry of this stamp is rare in the English ballad of the century, which exhibits hardly any imaginative power, and is mainly confined to versifying contemporary transactions such as the "winning of Cales" [Cadiz] and the adventures of Stukeley, or romantic incidents so generally credited as to have taken rank as popular tales, such as *The Blind Beggar's Daughter of Bednall Green*, *The Spanish Lady's Love*, and *The Merchant's Daughter of Bristol*. Sometimes the poet goes back to an ancient legend, as in the ballads on King Lear and Fair Rosamond ; but almost the only instance of a purely fictitious tale is *King Cophclua*, where the peculiar form shows that the minstrel simply appropriated an old metrical romance. Tennyson's modern rendering has far more of the true ballad spirit. As a rule, the English balladist is more of a professional than his Scotch brother, and sets himself more systematically to besing his subject. He deals with its most obvious aspects in a matter of fact way, and has few of the Caledonian gleams of high imagination. Such a ballad as *The Lady Turned Serving-man* is mere rhymed prose, which irresistibly suggests the blind man and his dog. But

*English  
Ballads*

<sup>1</sup> Wood—*shaw*.

the singer has frequently a fine instinct for heroism, and can render full justice to such a theme as the sea fight between Lord Howard and Sir Andrew Barton, the Scotch rover Sir Andrew has beams attached to his mantop, which he lets fall upon the deck of the enemy, thus sinking the hostile vessel. Every Scot who has essayed to drop this contrivance has been shot by the English archer Horseley, and at last Sir Andrew comes forward himself in his armour of proof :

Sir Andrew he did swarve the tree,  
 With right good will he swarved then.  
 Upon his breast did Horseley hit,  
 But the arrow bounded back again  
 Then Horseley spied a privy place  
 With a perfect eye in a secret part ;  
 Under the spole of his right arm  
 He smote Sir Andrew to the heart

" Fight on, my men," Sir Andrew says,  
 " A litle I'm hurt, but yet not slain.  
 I'll but lie down and bleed a while,  
 And then I'll rise and fight again  
 Fight on, my men," Sir Andrew says,  
 " And never flinch before the foe,  
 And stand fast by St Andrew's cross  
 Until you hear my whistle blow "

They never heard his whistle blow--  
 Which made their hearts wax sore adread  
 Then Horseley said, " Aboard, my lord,  
 For well I wot Sir Andrew's dead "  
 They boarded then his noble ship,  
 They boarded it with might and main ,  
 Eighteen score Scots alive they found,  
 The rest were either maimed or slain

This is historical , the incident occurred in 1511, and the " noble ship " became the second vessel in Henry VIII 's navy It is to be feared that there is not equal authority for the exploits, at the siege of Ghent, of the heroine of the spirited ballad, *Mary Ambree*, though they are probably not quite devoid of foundation

She led up her soldiers in battle array  
 'Gainst three times their number at break of the day ;  
 Seven hours in skirmish continued she  
 Was not this a brave bonny lass, Mary Ambree ?

She filléd the skies with the smoke of her shot,  
 And her enemies' bodies with bullets so hot ;  
 For one of her own men a score killéd she .  
 Was not this a brave bonny lass, Mary Ambree ?

And when her false gunner, to spoil her intent,  
 Away all her pellets and powder had sent,  
 Straight with her keen weapon she slashed him in three .  
 Was not this a brave bonny lass, Mary Ambree ?

or a humorous character, such as *The Miller of Mansfield*. Perhaps the only example of trisyllabic metre being adapted to a theme of tragic interest is the Scotch ballad of *The Bonnie Earl of Murray*, and there is scarcely an instance of its being employed for songs before the Restoration. Anapæsts and their congeners, however, peep occasionally into old ballads like *True Thomas*, and largely leaven merry strains, such as the ringing Bacchanalian carol, *Jolly Good Ale and Old*, profanely attributed to a bishop :

I love no roast but a nut-brown toast,  
 And a crab laid in the fire ;  
 A little bread shall do me stead,  
 Much bread I not desire.  
 No frost, nor snow, nor wind, I trow,  
 Can hurt me if I wold ;  
 I am so wrapped and thoroughly lapped  
 In jolly good ale and old.

And Tib, my wife, that as her life  
 Loveth well good ale to seek,  
 Full oft drinks she till ye may see  
 The tears run down her cheek :  
 Then doth she trowl to me the bowl  
 Even as a maltworm shold,  
 And saith, "Sweetheart, I took my part  
 Of this jolly good ale and old."

If Bishop Still was the author, which is not likely, "Tib" must be a fair creation of the poet, for he was not married in 1566, the date of the primitive English comedy, *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, where the song first appeared, though it is believed to be still older.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE PREDECESSORS OF SHAKESPEARE

*World-wide  
importance of  
the English  
drama*

WE have now arrived at the threshold of the literary movement which has given the age of Elizabeth rank among the most important intellectual epochs of the world. Its drama, and its drama alone, has bestowed upon it a place in literature corresponding to that which it has earned in political history by its deliverance of Europe by the discomfiture of the Armada and in science by the method of Bacon and the discoveries of Gilbert and Harvey. Without its drama it would still have been a rich and glorious literary epoch for England, but no world-wide significance could have been attributed to it. Even without Shakespeare it would have vied not unsuccessfully with the dramatic literatures of France, Spain, and Germany, and attracted students and admirers from all those countries. With Shakespeare, it has obtained naturalisation in every civilised land, and more or less metamorphosed every national drama. Leaving theologians and philosophers and men of science out of the question, and confining our attention to letters, it may safely be affirmed that more has been written about Shakespeare than about all other European writers together between Dante and Goethe.

*The drama a  
development of  
the miracle  
play*

Nothing is more remarkable in the history of the Elizabethan drama than the extreme suddenness of its development. We seem to pass in an instant from an atmosphere of barbarism to an atmosphere of art. The transition was indeed abrupt, yet seemed more sudden than was really the case. It had been slowly prepared by a long succession of antecedent developments, according, by a rare felicity, with the development of the nation itself. It has already been described in a previous chapter on the Miracle Play how the origin of the English drama was, like that of the Greek, religious; how the growing taste for pomp and show in church services, partly arising from the language in which they were conducted having become unintelligible to the people, generated spectacular performances of a religious cast too elaborate and too much leavened with profane elements to be suitable for performance in church, thus laying the foundation of the modern theatre. The circumstance that these representations were given on holidays greatly favoured the mirthful element they had included from the first, and at the zenith of the miracle play its constituent elements included precursors alike of the more dignified tragedy and the more refined comedy of the coming age. Side by side with this entirely democratic form of drama existed another, the toy of the learned, but unknown to the people, the scholarly imitation of



Terence, written by professors and schoolmasters for representation by their pupils. On the Continent this form of drama flourished greatly during the later Middle Age; in England the evidences of its existence are few and far between, but it certainly did exist. The preponderating elements of the

drama at the time when the drama began to assert for itself an existence independent of the miracle play were comic, and it might be expected that the English drama would begin with comedy. Before, however, this step could be taken, it had to pass through a transition stage—the morality, corresponding to the Spanish and Portuguese *auto*, in which, although Man and his subtle Enemy play their part, and celestial and infernal personages may be called upon to enrich the action and redress its balance, the characters are for the most part abstractions, personified Vices and Virtues. Perhaps the earliest example of the morality is *The Pride of Life*, written

**Ther begynneth a treatyse how þe  
fader of heuen sendeth dethe to so-  
mon every creature to come and  
gyue a counte of theyr lyues in  
this worlde and is in maner  
of a morall playe.**



First page of "Everyman"

*From the Brihwel copy*

probably about 1400, and printed in Professor Brandl's *Quellen*. It is a very rude and imperfect production. *Mankind*, also edited by Professor Brandl, was certainly written under Edward IV. We have already referred to a more elaborate example in *The Castle of Perseverance*, where Man is represented as hesitating between his good and his evil angel, and standing a siege in a stronghold garrisoned by all the Virtues. It was remarked that this development of the miracle play or mystery was favourable to the dramatic

art, rendering the poet more independent of conventionalities, and compelling him to rely mainly upon his own invention. It served as a stepping-stone for the Portuguese Gil Vicente, incomparably the greatest dramatic poet of the first half of the sixteenth century, to rise into the regions of purely secular comedy and farce, where, as well as in his moralities, more amusing than devout, he displayed the unflagging humour and the unflagging melody

of Aristophanes. No English writer of moralities was an eminent poet like Gil Vicente, nor did any venture upon the decisive step he took; yet the productions of this transition period evince a decided advance in art over the old miracle play.

The most important of the pure moralities, primitive drafts of the Spanish *autos*, which became popular in England towards the end of the fifteenth century, and form a transition from the miracle play to the interludes of Heywood, without, however, any approximation to the secular drama or any but a strictly moral and religious purpose, are *Everyman* and *Hickscorner*, the former of which has become well known from its recent revival and republication. The circumstance argues some literary merit, and, in fact, although nothing can be

*The Morality*



Title page of "*Hickscorner*," 1510

balder or less quotable than the diction of *Everyman*, it is a remarkable instance of dramatic effect obtained by simple adherence to an interesting action. "The subject of this piece," says Bishop Percy, "is the summoning of man out of the world by death; and its moral that nothing will then avail him but a well-spent life and the comforts of religion." After giving a brief analysis, Percy observes with justice: "It is remarkable that in this old simple drama the fable is conducted upon the strictest model of the Greek tragedy. The action is simply one, the time of action is that of the performance, the scene is never changed, nor the stage ever empty. Except in the circumstance of *Everyman*'s expiring on the stage, the *Samson*

*Agonistes* of Milton is hardly formed on a severer plan." *Hickscorner* has greater variety and more of a comic cast. The personage from whom it takes its name is a ruffling blade who plays dire tricks with Imagination and Free Will, who are eventually set right by Perseverance and Contemplation. There is local colouring as well as humour in this description of a thief's profitable evening :

Sirs, he walked through Holborn,  
Three hours after the sun was down,  
And walked up towards Saint Giles in the Fields,  
He hoved still, and there beheld ;  
But there he could not speed of his prey,  
And straight to Ludgate he took the way ;  
Ye wot well, that 'potheraries walk very late,  
He came to a door and privily spake  
To a prentice for a penny-worth of euphorbium,  
And also for a halfpenny-worth of alum plumb ;  
This good servant served him shortly,  
And said, is there aught else that you would buy ?  
Then he asked for a mouthful of quick brimstone,<sup>1</sup>  
And down into the cellar when the servant was gone,  
Aside as he cast his eye,  
A great bag of money did he spy ;  
Therein was a hundred pound :  
He turned him to his feet, and yede his way round.  
He was lodged in Newgate at the Swan,  
And every man took him for a gentleman.

These pieces belong to the early part of the sixteenth century, as does the very curious play of *The Four Elements*, in which the discovery of America (called by this name) is said to have been made within the last twenty years. It might almost be considered a scientific drama, and is really valuable as an index to the popular physical science of the day, but ranks among moralities nevertheless. The only extant copy is mutilated, and breaks off just as Nature is admonishing Humanity :

Though it be for thee full necessary  
For thy comfort sometime to satisfy  
Thy carnal appetite :  
Yet it is not convenient for thee  
To put therein thy felicity,  
And all thy whole delight.

*The World and the Child* is of the same date and character ; but *Lusty Juventus*, *New Custom*, *God's Promises*, and *The Trial of Treasure* are of considerably later date, being all composed in support of the Reformation, probably in the reign of Edward VI. *Lusty Juventus* begins with a pretty song :

In an arbour green asleep where I lay,  
The birds sang sweet in the midst of the day ;  
I dreaméd fast of mirth and play :  
In youth is pleasure, in youth is pleasure.

Methought I walked still to and fro,  
And from her company I could not go ;

<sup>1</sup> Gunpowder. The peculiar system of measure is not to be taken too literally.

But when I waked, it was not so :  
In youth is pleasure, in youth is pleasure.

Therefore my heart is surely pight  
Of her alone to have a sight,  
Which is my joy and heart's delight :  
In youth is pleasure, in youth is pleasure.



Verso of Title-page of "Hicke Scorne" 1510

Two writers previously mentioned among poets, John Skelton and Sir David Lindsay, wrote moralities, or pieces hardly distinguishable from moralities. About Skelton's *Magnificence* there can, indeed, be no hesitation, the conception and machinery are entirely that of the moral drama. *Magnificence*, deserted, like *Everyman*, by his false friends, is, like *Everyman*, preserved by following the admonitions of a new set of counsellors, though not till he has made acquaintance with Mischiefe and Despair. Another morality attributed to Skelton, *The Necromancer*, has only been seen by Warton, if Warton himself ever saw it, which some doubt. According to him, it was an attack on abuses in the Church, the redressing of which seems to have been confided to the Devil.<sup>1</sup> Lindsay's *Satyre of the Thre Estairs* (1540) must also be reckoned among moralities, most of the characters being impersonations

of abstract qualities. It takes, however, a much wider range than any of the pieces we have been considering, dealing with all the most crying abuses in Church and State, and occupying, it is affirmed, nine hours in the representa-

<sup>1</sup> It might have been mentioned previously that Skelton's ballad on Flodden Field is the earliest ballad known to have been printed separately.

tion. It has few pretensions to poetry, but deserves respect as the work of a statesman who could read the signs of the times, and who scented the coming Reformation.

We have now arrived at the time, about 1520, when the morality is about to pass into the drama. In this change comedy was almost certain to take precedence of tragedy, being more acceptable to audiences in general, and more within the compass of the few, and by no means highly cultivated, writers who as yet devoted themselves to the theatre. Nor can it be doubted that most of these would be more or less acquainted with the farces which at the time abounded in France, for the most part short, drastic compositions in verse, resembling Gil Vicente's pieces in so far as they sought to amuse by strong, ludicrous situations, but as destitute of the Portuguese author's poetry as of his melody. The play, however, which should perhaps be accounted earliest in date is neither French nor indigenous, but Spanish, being a greatly abridged version of Rojas's interminable *Calisto and Melibea*. Although cut down to the dimensions of an interlude, the piece is memorable as being the first exhibited in England that can be said to possess a plot or to be directed with consistent purpose to a catastrophe. It is no less remarkable for possessing a heroine and treating women seriously. "For the first time since plays became secular," says Dr. Gayley, "women are introduced, not as the objects of scurrility and ridicule, but as dramatic material of an æsthetic, moral, and intellectual value equal to that of men." While the romantic drama thus entered England under Spanish auspices, the author of another interlude, *Thersites*, translated Ravisius Textor; and John Heywood reproduced the spirit and some of the incidents of contemporary French farce in *Johan Johan*, which might pass for a precursor of Molière's *George Dandin*. The resemblance is no doubt to be accounted for by derivation from a common source, going as far back as Apuleius. The humour of the situation between the recalcitrant but eventually subjected husband, the imperious wife, and the priest who makes himself at home is hardly worked out as fully as it might have been; much was probably trusted to the by-play of the actors. The ease and spirit of the dialogue, nevertheless, manifest a decided advance in dramatic handling.

*Johan Johan* is attributed on good authority to John Heywood, with whom we have already made acquaintance as an epigrammatist. In this department, as we have seen, he is chronologically, if not in point of merit, the first of English poets: in fact, the first recorded English epigram is not older than his time. It would be too much to term him the father of English comedy also, for he was neither admired nor copied by his successors ("his name to Ben Jonson meant uncouth antiquity"), but he may well be entitled its patriarch. His great distinction is tersely stated by Mr. Pollard: "To have shown that comedy was entitled to a separate existence, apart from didactics, was no small achievement." He is said to have been a friend of Sir Thomas More, a circumstance which, as well as his attachment to the Roman Church under Queen Mary, might cast doubt on his alleged authorship

*Passage from  
the Morality to  
the Drama*

*John Heywood*

of *The Pardoner and the Frere*, were it not for sundry mediæval precedents. His other pieces, however, would suffice for his reputation as the initiator of the transition to real comedy. *The Four Ps*, turning upon an old jest, is very amusing; but the best, *The Play of the Weather* printed in 1533, is in conception quite Aristophanic, and all the more so from an apparent undercurrent of political allusion. Jupiter, in a discourse exceedingly like the preamble to one of Henry VIII.'s Acts of Parliament, announces that things have hitherto gone amiss in sundry important departments of the Cosmos, but that, with the assent and co-operation of his parliament, he is going to amend them :

Before our presence, in our high parliament,  
Both gods and goddesses of all degrees  
Hath late assembled, by common assent,  
For the redress of certain enormities  
Bred among them, thorow extremities  
Abused in each to other of them all,  
Namely, to purpose, in these most special :

Our foresaid father Saturn, and Phœbus,  
Aeolus and Phœbe,<sup>1</sup> these four by name,  
Whose natures, not only, so far contrarious,  
But also of malice each other to defame,  
Have long time abused, right far out of frame,  
The due course of all their constellations,  
To the great damage of all earthly nations.

Upon this being pointed out to them, the delinquents have voluntarily surrendered their offices to Jupiter, just as if they were abbots, and their prerogatives monasteries; although the date of publication shows that this was not the special object of the poet's satire :

They have, in conclusion, wholly surrendered  
Into our hands, as much as concerning  
All manner weathers by them engendered,  
The full of their powers, for term everlasting,  
To set such order as standeth with our pleasing,  
Which thing, as of our part, no part required,  
But of all their parties right humbly desired.

The hobbling versification of the old poet must not obscure the humour of his conception, which is enhanced when Jupiter, looking about for a herald, pitches upon Merry Report, who excels in the art of putting things :

To a certain widow this day was I sent,  
Whose husband departed without her witting,  
A special good lover and she his own sweeting,  
To whom, at my coming, I cast such a figure,  
Mingling the matter according to my nature,  
That when we departed, above all other things,  
She thanked me heartily for my merry tidings.

Proclamation is accordingly made, and every man is found suing for a

<sup>1</sup> The dispensers respectively, Mr. Pollard points out, of frost, sunshine, wind, and rain.

different kind of weather to serve his own occasions, the climax being reached by an urchin who would like snow in summer :

Forsooth, sir, my mind is this, at few words,  
All my pleasure is in catching of birds,  
And making of snowballs and throwing the same :  
For the which purpose to have set in frame,<sup>1</sup>  
With my godfather god I would fain have spoken,  
Desiring him to have sent me by some token  
Where I might have had great frost for my pitfalls,  
And plenty of snow to make my snowballs.  
This once had, boys' lives be such as no man leads.  
Oh, to see my snowballs light on my fellows' heads,  
And to hear the birds how they flicker their wings  
In the pitfall! I say it passeth all things.  
Sir, if ye be god's servant, or his kinsman,  
I pray you help me in this if you can.

Jupiter announces his intention of distributing the weather as he may think fit ; the petitioners thank him effusively, as though they had obtained some enormous concession, and Merry Report sums up :

Lo ! how this is brought to pass !  
Sirs, now shall ye have the weather even as it was.

“There can be no doubt,” Dr. Ward justly observes, “that so soon as the interludes of John Heywood, and compositions more or less resembling these in kind, had established themselves in popular favour as an accepted dramatic species, the required transition from the moralities to comedy had, to all intents and purposes, been effected.” There was, nevertheless, no piece in existence that could claim the title of a comedy. The first example of a play with a regular comic intrigue, worked out by personages discriminated to the best of the author's ability, and divided into acts and scenes, was given by NICHOLAS UDALL in *Ralph Roister Doister*, and constitutes a landmark in our literature, even though the play be bad and the author not much better. It would be most interesting to be able to date it with precision. It was formerly thought to have been written for Eton boys while Udall was headmaster, between 1534 and 1541, but Professor Hales has almost overthrown this opinion. Udall's apparent indebtedness to Heywood's *Proverbs*, published in 1546, may be explained by supposing both writers to have used the same current popular expressions : but when it appears that there is no allusion to *Ralph Roister Doister* in the first and second editions of Thomas Wilson's *Rule of Reason*, published in 1551 and 1552, but that it is quoted in the edition of 1553, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that it was first performed in one of the two latter years, when Udall had become, or was on the point of becoming, master of Westminster.

Whenever first produced, *Ralph Roister Doister's* freedom from indecency renders it almost certain that it was written to be acted by boys, and the author was unquestionably a schoolmaster. Udall, born in 1505 or 1506, had distinguished himself at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, where he is said

<sup>1</sup> Made arrangements.

to have incurred disfavour by his attachment to the doctrines of the Reformers. Any loss he may have suffered on this account was amply made up to him when, in 1534, he was appointed master of Eton School. He forfeited his position in 1541 from pecuniary irregularities and yet more serious imputations, which may have been disproved, since he was paid his salary to the time of his removal and was allowed to retain his living of Braintree. It is a point in his favour that his troubles coincided with a strong reaction towards Roman Catholicism, following the execution of Cromwell. After a while, Queen Katherine Parr, a supporter of the Reformation, noticed him, and he assisted in translating Erasmus's paraphrase of the Gospels. He did much literary and other work for the Government under Edward VI., but upon the accession of Mary deserted the Reformation with the alacrity of a Vicar of Bray. Bishop Gardiner, undismayed by past scandals, made him his own household school-master, and on the strength, as may be supposed, of *Ralph Roister Doister*, he received a commission to prepare interludes to be acted at Court. In or about 1554 he was made headmaster of Westminster School, which Henry VIII. had founded in 1540. This appointment he lost when, in 1556, Mary delivered the school to the re-established monastery of Westminster, and Udall died almost immediately afterwards. He had written a drama on the story of King Hezekiah, extant and acted in Elizabeth's time, and several comedies, now lost.

Neither Udall nor his play would have attracted much attention if they had not come at the head of English comic poets and comic pieces. If *Ralph Roister Doister* could have had any literary distinction it would have been as a clever adaptation of the *Miles Gloriosus* of Plautus; but, in fact, it is a feeble one. One merit it certainly possesses—the easy and natural progress of the scenes; and it may be granted that it is one of those plays which would act better than they read. Much mirth might, no doubt, be derived from the actors' facial expressions and by-play; and a play acted by boys may generally count upon indulgence.

Passing over *Jacob and Esau*, *Queen Hester*, and other pieces not unworthy of notice, but belonging to the class of interludes, we find the rank of the second English comedy disputable rather than disputed between *Misogonus* and the far better known *Gammer Gurton's Needle*. There is nothing in common between the two plays, the former of which a regular comedy on the classical model, with a grave didactic purpose; the other, if it had not been lengthened out to the dimensions of a comedy, would have been ranked with farces. Neither possesses much literary merit, but the less ambitious is the more interesting; for *Misogonus* has no root in the national life, while *Gammer Gurton's Needle* really is a leaf from "the short and simple annals of the poor." Many types of character are presented with vivid truth, from the mischief-making half-witted vagrant down to the domestic cat, whose misdeed is the pivot of the action. We learn exactly how an English peasant husband of Elizabeth's time would express himself when put out:

Whereeto served your hands and eyes, but this your neele to keep?  
What devil had you else to do? ye kept, ich wot, no sheep.

"*Gammer  
Gurton's  
Needle*"



Cham fañ abroad to dig and delve, in water, mire, and clay,  
 Sossing and possing in the dirt still from day to day.  
 A hundred things that be abroad, cham yet to see them wele,  
 And four of you sit idle at home, and cannot keep a neele!

The decriers of machinery may be invited to consider the commotion produced in the days of Elizabeth by the loss of one poor needle, the idea that another might be producible from the family stores, or obtainable on loan from a neighbour, never occurring to anybody, even though the integrity of Hodge's breeches is at stake. Gammer Gurton's directions to the serving-boy how to find the family candle cast interesting light on another department of domestic economy:

Go, hie thee soon,  
 And grope behind the old brass  
 pan, which thing when thou  
 hast done,  
 There shalt thou find an old shoe,  
 wherein if thou look well,  
 Thee shalt find lying an inch of  
 an old tallow candel,  
 Light it, and bring it tite away.

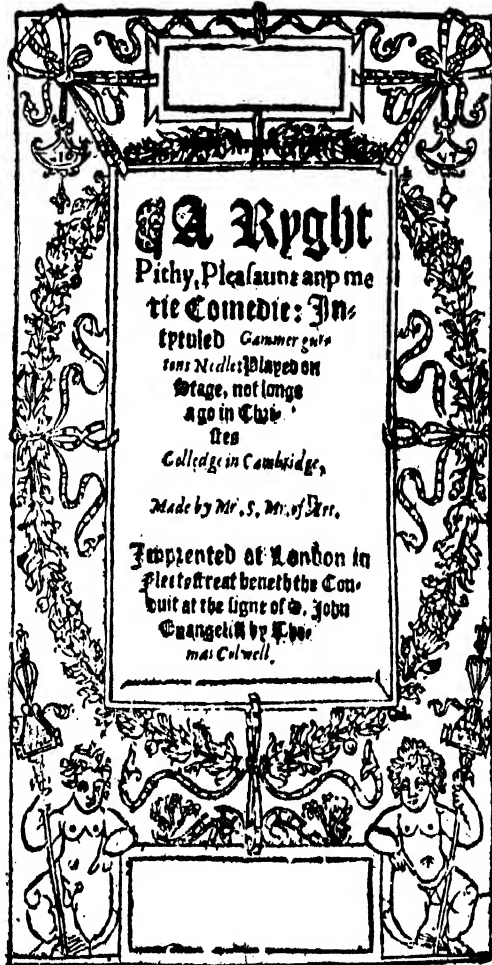
It is not surprising that Gammer has to exclaim:

Our candle is at an end, my neele  
 is still where it was.

The needle, originally dropped by Gammer in her indignation at the lawless proceedings of Gib the cat, is, of course, eventually recovered.

Most of the piece is in a West-country dialect, although it was written and acted at Cambridge. If we are to infer, as seems reasonable, that West-country was the speech accepted as appropriate to rustics, this seems to imply a number of such comedies now lost.

The question of priority between *Gammer Gurton* and *Misogonus* must be decided in favour of the former if Mr. Henry Bradley is right, as he probably is, in identifying this production of Mr. S., Master of Arts, as the title-page describes the author, with "Mr. Stevenson's plaie," acted in 1559. The date of *Misogonus* is fixed by internal evidence at 1560. Stevenson appears



Title-page of "Gammer Gurton's Needle," 1575

to have produced a college play as early as 1553-1554, which may have been *Gammer Gurton*. On the other hand, the Marprelate tracts state that it was generally attributed to Dean, afterwards Bishop, Bridges; and this the writer evidently does not disbelieve, though he affects to consider the Dean incapable of writing any so clever. The ascription to Bishop Still seems refuted by the gravity of that exemplary prelate

Connecting  
links between  
the morality  
and the drama

Before proceeding to an unquestionable tragedy in Sackville and Norton's *Gorboduc*, brief reference should be made to a class of composition intermediate between the morality and tragedy, as Heywood's interludes form a transition between morality and comedy. The distinguishing mark of such pieces is that while the action and the leading characters are historical, many of the personages are allegorical figures of vices and virtues, or even classes of society, and the "Vice" of the morality reappears, though he may not bear the name. In *Appius and Virginia* he is called "Haphazard"; in *Cambyses*, "Ambidexter." These two plays were probably written shortly after *Gorboduc*. An older member of the class, Bishop Bale's *King John*, dates from the reign of Edward VI. It is very remarkable as a panegyric of John, of whom so little good has been said, as the representative of English liberties against the encroachments of Rome. Shakespeare took somewhat of a similar line, though he refrained from representing John as the Proto-martyr of the Reformation.

Upon a good zeal he attempted very far  
For wealth of this realm to provide reformation  
In the Church thereof, but they did him debar  
Of that good purpose, for by excommunication  
The space of seven years they interdict this nation.  
These bloodsuckers thus of cruelty and spite  
Subdued this good King for executing right.

"Nature formed the Poet for the King!"

Whenever written or first represented, *Gammer Gurton's Needle* was acted at Cambridge in 1563. Two years earlier an epoch had been created in English dramatic history by the performance at the Temple of *Gorboduc*, the first English tragedy, the joint composition of Thomas Sackville, of whom an account has already been given, and THOMAS NORTON (1532-1554), like Sackville a man versed in public affairs, and afterwards painfully notorious for his severity in the prosecution of Roman Catholics. It must be remembered that he was the son-in-law of Archbishop Cranmer, who had been treated with even greater severity. Warton, whose opinions on matters of taste deserve the utmost respect, attributes the entire play to Sackville, from the prevailing similarity of style. It appears to us, however, that, granting Norton any poetical gift at all, which it would be hard to deny him merely because in versifying the Psalms he failed where no one has succeeded, the resemblance in manner is sufficiently accounted for by the resemblance in poetical form, now the rule in English tragedies, then a daring novelty. *Gorboduc* is not only the first regular English tragedy, but the second important essay in English blank verse after Surrey's specimens of the *Æneid*. The trick once learned, it was not difficult for accomplished

men to write with uniformity of style upon a stately and somewhat monotonous pattern. Their innovation was of momentous importance, providing the dignified drama, whether tragedy or comedy, at once and for ever with the style that best befitted it. In truth, but for blank verse, the English stage would never have possessed a poetical drama.

It will further be observed that *Gorboduc* is, in fact, two plays, and that the first three acts are but a prologue to the others. These latter are the portion of the play attributed to Sackville, who could not find time or mood to finish his own *Mirror for Magistrates*, and may well have devolved the less interesting

*Political tendency of  
"Gorboduc"*



Knole Park, built by Sackville

*From a picture by Paul Sandby*

part of his tragedy upon an associate. The story, like *Lear*, is taken from the fabulous annals of Trojan Britain, and is another version of the same idea. As *Lear* between his daughters, *Gorboduc* divides his realm between his sons Ferrex and Porrex. Each aspires to the sole sovereignty. A civil war ensues. Porrex kills Ferrex, and is himself slain by his mother Videna. The exasperated people slay Videna and *Gorboduc* himself. The line of Brutus thus becoming extinct, the country falls into fearful anarchy between the insurgents, the nobles, and a Scotch invader. The curtain falls upon a scene of utter confusion, inconsistent with the precepts of the dramatic art, but conformable to what was then believed to be history. It actually is related that the extinction of the royal line was followed by an anarchy of fifty years, terminated

at last by Dunwallon, Prince of Cornwall, who founded a new dynasty. It is of more importance that this conclusion, so unsatisfactory from the point of view of dramatic art, is needful for the serious purpose of the play. *Gorboduc* cannot be understood unless it is recognised that it was composed with a direct political object. It is the work of two statesmen, who felt, as all statesmen must, the danger to which the realm was exposed throughout Elizabeth's reign by the precariousness of the succession. The object of the piece is to persuade the Queen to marry, and the poet's end is gained by a powerful delineation of the universal misery consequent upon the absence of legitimate heirs. Nothing can be clearer than the drift of the speech of the wise counsellor Eubulus near the end :

And this [civil discord] doth grow, when lo ! unto the prince  
Whom death or sudden hap of life bereaves,  
No certain heir remains such certain heir  
As not all only is the rightful heir,  
But to the realm is surely known to be,  
And truth thereby vested in subjects' hearts  
To owe faith there, where right is known to rest.  
Alas, in parliament what hope can be,  
When is of parliament no hope at all ?  
Which though it be assembled by consent,  
Yet is not likely with consent to end.

The moral is further enforced by the production of a Scotch prince, Fergus, Duke of Albany, as claimant of the crown and invader of the kingdom, a clear allusion to the danger of the succession of Mary Stuart. There is also a plain hint that the Queen will do well to choose an English consort

The above lines are a fair sample of the diction of the play, rather adapted to command respect than admiration. One passage, however, describing the death of Porrex, murdered by his mother, attains the elevation of true poetry :

His eyes, even now unclosed,  
Beheld the queen, and cried to her for help.  
We then, alas ! the ladies which that time  
Did there attend, seeing that heinous deed,  
And hearing him oft call the wretched name  
Of mother, and to cry to her for aid,  
Whose direful hand gave him the mortal wound,  
Pitying, alas ! for nought else could we do,  
His ruthful end, ran to the woeful bed,  
Despoiled straight his breast, and, all we might,  
Wiped in vain with napkins next at hand,  
The sudden streams of blood that flushed far  
Out of the gaping wound. O what a look,  
O what a rueful steadfast eye, methought,  
He fixed upon my face, which to my death  
Will never part from me, when with a braid<sup>1</sup>  
A deep-fetched sigh he gave, and therewithal,  
Clasping his hands, to heaven he cast his sight ;  
And straight, pale death pressing within his face,  
The flying ghost his mortal corpse forsook.

<sup>1</sup> Start.

The relation of the death by a messenger is in the manner of Seneca, to whom, as well as to the Italian tragic writers, also imitators of Seneca, the authors are much indebted. On the other hand, the unities are set at defiance. The use of blank verse was probably suggested by Italian precedent. Classical influence is manifested by the Chorus, which sums up and moralises upon the situation at the end of every act. Native talent excogitated the Dumb Show, preceding each act and prefiguring its character; thus, a representation of the fable of the Bundle of Sticks ushers in the inculcation of political unity, and the Furies are called into requisition when murder has to be done.

*Cambyzes* and *Appius and Virginia*, tragedies of about the period of *Gorboduc*, have already been mentioned as remarkable for their carrying over the "Vice" of the moralities to serious tragedy. As specimens of the dramatic art they are extremely rude and primitive. *Tancred and Gismundo*, though dealing outrageously in horrors, is less in "Cambyzes' vein," and was refurbished for representation in 1591. It was the work of five authors, and is perhaps the first English play taken from an Italian novel. *Damon and Pythias*, by RICHARD EDWARDS (1523? -1566), is of considerable interest as the first tragi-comedy, the situation being one of tragic suspense until the happy *dénouement* of the return of Pythias. If it had but been in blank verse instead of fourteen-syllable couplets, and if some good genius had frequently whispered to Edwards that he was getting tedious, *Damon and Pythias* might have been a good play. The writer has excellent ideas and sound dramatic instincts, but lacks strength to emancipate himself from the conventions of his age, which are most anti-dramatic. In one respect he deserves much credit, his happy invention of a pair of false friends, a philosopher, and a courtier, to heighten the true friendship of Damon and Pythias by the irony of contrast. Edwards would have been a good comic poet with a more liberal endowment of *vis comica*. He was an Oxford M.A., a student of music, and master of the children at the Chapel Royal. A later tragi-comedy or comedy of his on the story of Palamon and Arcite, now lost, gave great contentment to Queen Elizabeth.

*Edwards and  
other drama-  
tists*

Edwards was a Court poet, and the first dramatists who succeeded in achieving a really literary drama, Lyly and Peele, were, in their first efforts at least, Court poets also. Many plays, both by Court poets for the entertainment of the Queen and the aristocracy, and by humbler pens for the amusement of the public, doubtless filled up the gap of sixteen or seventeen years, but in general their titles alone survive as tokens of the existence of an active literary industry. We know, for example, that a play founded on Montemayor's romance of *Diana Enamorada* was performed before Elizabeth in 1584, and may have suggested *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, but not a syllable of it is preserved. Almost the only dramatic author of the period who has bequeathed both his name and his work to posterity is George Whetstone, the translator of Cinthio, who in 1578 printed *Promos and Cassandra*, a rhyming play of formidable extent, too long and heavy to be acted, but interesting for having afforded the plot of *Measure for Measure*. Nor should the dramatic translations and imitations of George Gascoigne be overlooked; his *Supposes*, after Ariosto,

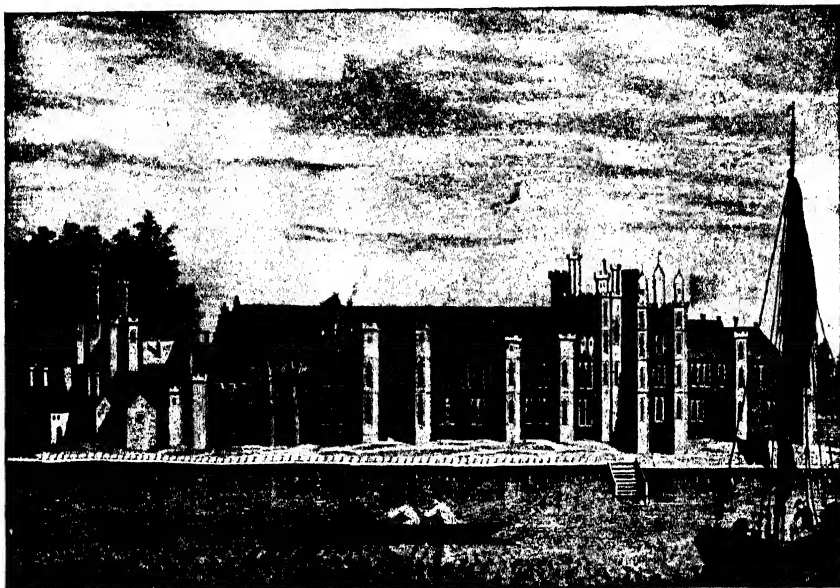
*Whetstone and  
Gascoigne*

is the earliest extant comedy in English prose; and his *Jocasta*, adapted from Euripides through the medium of an Italian imitation, is the second English tragedy in blank verse.

Being now arrived at the period of CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE, who first gave the English drama rank among the great dramatic literatures of the world, a short space may be advantageously devoted to the inquiry how Melpomene and Thalia were housed, and what were the accessories of theatrical representation.

*The Theatres*

We have seen that the Miracle Play was performed upon huge movable stages, drawn or pushed along upon wheels from one part of the town where



Greenwich Palace in the Sixteenth Century

*From an engraving by Basire in "Vetusta Monumenta," 1767*

the performance took place to another, the audience standing below in the open air. This may have answered sufficiently well so long as performances took place only once a year, but was evidently inconsistent with daily representation. Instead of bringing the theatre to the audience it had become necessary to bring the audience to the theatre, but the erection of play-houses, however plainly demanded by the needs of the situation, was long delayed by want of capital and by the opposition of the municipal authorities, who not merely contemned and suspected players as loose characters but dreaded all concourses of people as the means of generating and diffusing contagious disorders. For some time performances were chiefly given in the yards of large inns, to which the actors who gave representations at Court or in the mansions of the great, naturally resorted at the times when their services were not required by their patrons. It was not until 1576 or 1577 that a theatre, called *The Theatre*, because at the time it was the only one, was erected in

Finsbury Fields, followed shortly afterwards by the Curtain, in Shoreditch. The Rose, the Swan, the Globe succeeded, all built on the Bankside, Southwark, on the south side of the Thames. The pencil of Johannes De Witt, a Dutch visitor to London in 1596, has happily preserved for us the semblance of the Swan Theatre, erected probably in 1593, and according to De Witt much the finest theatre in London at the time of his visit. It could hold, he assures us, three thousand spectators, and was the only theatre in London built of stone. The general aspect of the edifice will be apparent from the accompanying reproduction of the original drawing, brought to light by Dr. Gaedertz, and now preserved in Utrecht. The shape is oval, and if the stage and its appendages of dressing-rooms were really entirely surrounded by boxes, the performance must have been invisible to a considerable part of the house. There is no appearance of a seated pit, but chairs and benches were probably brought in when required; and the stage may have been movable, to allow of the exhibition of bull- and bear-baiting. The spectators, it will be observed, are protected from the weather by a tiled roof, but the performers have no shelter; and the want of covering must have increased the difficulty of effective declamation. De Witt unfortunately tells us nothing respecting the equipment of the actors, or mentions the name of the piece they are representing. The theatre had evidently excited his admiration; it was built, he says, of flints, supported on wooden pillars painted in imitation of marble. He was induced to depict it by its general resemblance to a Roman amphitheatre.



The Interior of the "Swan Theatre"

From a sketch made by J. de Witt in 1596, now in the University Library at Utrecht

Next to the edifices, the performers and the audiences must be taken into account. Though a popular, the English theatre was not originally a democratic institution. The phrase, even now surviving, "His Majesty's

Performances  
and audiences

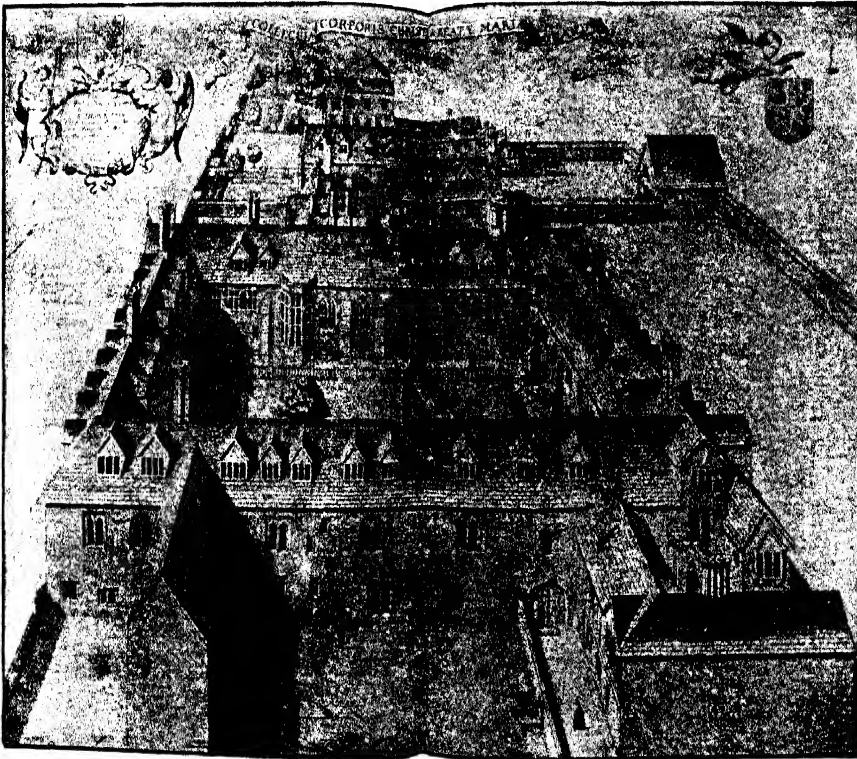
Servants," reminds us how greatly indebted it was in its early days to the patronage of the Crown, and the aristocracy followed the example of the Queen. We read of the troops of actors maintained by great nobles like Leicester and Pembroke, the former of whom obtained a special licence for his troop in 1573. Municipal authorities were empowered to grant or refuse licences at their discretion. The Queen's own players passed as the Lord Chamberlain's. The partiality of the Crown for dramatic entertainments involved the encouragement of acting in the provinces, as plays were given for the Queen's amusement in all her numerous progresses, and it was necessary to have actors at hand at least in sufficient numbers to tutor unskilled performers. The disadvantages of attempting performances with a mere scratch company are, as all know, exhibited to the life in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. This countenance from the Court enabled the stage to hold its ground against the hostility of serious men and fathers of families, who in protecting the community from physical and moral contagion ran great risk of suppressing Shakespeare. The general body of the people, neither courtiers nor councillors, were no doubt favourable to the drama. Whatever credit may be due to the tradition of Shakespeare having at one time gained his livelihood by holding horses at the theatre-door, it evinces that the theatre was frequented by people who could afford to ride to it, while, on the other hand, passages from contemporary satirists establish that such people might be jostled by unsavoury folk in working dresses. Two of the principal attractions of the stage in our day were then lacking—there were no actresses, women's parts being performed by boys, and there was no scenery. The absence of regular scene-painting may have been partly supplied by theatrical properties, as inventories mention tombs, beacons, steeples, and the mouth of hell itself.

*Status of the  
Actor*

Hamlet's directions to the players afford some insight into the intellectual status of the average performers of Shakespeare's day, which Shakespeare does not seem to have rated very highly. Hamlet appears to feel himself dealing with men of some natural aptitude, but devoid of culture and urbanity. Little else could be expected from the low social estimation in which the profession was then held and the conditions under which it was recruited. Leaving Shakespeare's own relation to it for further consideration, it may be said that almost the only actor likely to have had a superior education was Edward Alleyn, whose father, though by no means of high station, was apparently well-off. Tarlton and Knill had been tavern-keepers or connected with taverns; the elder Burbage had been a joiner, of Heminage and Condell we have no information. The want of actresses tended to stock the stage with good-looking boys, who might or might not have a real vocation. Recognition, nevertheless, could not be denied to pre-eminent ability. Scholars declared that Roscius lived again in Alleyn; and the appreciation of the mob kept Tarlton, the genius of low comedy, on sign-boards till the end of the eighteenth century. As a rule, however, the actor's calling was contemned by men of refinement, a circumstance with an important bearing on literary history, as it went near to wreck the drama altogether. When Sidney wrote his *Apology for Poetry* in reply



to the railings of Stephen Gosson, he took a grand and a right line as regarded the general cause of Poetry herself, but he erred with respect to the drama. Disgusted with the low standard of the stage at the time he wrote, alike as concerned the quality of the pieces, the quality of the performers, and the accompaniments of the drama in general, he misconceived these temporary and accidental defects as the inevitable adjuncts of a false system, and would, as he thought, have effected a radical cure by prescribing a return to the model of the classic stage, unities and all. Had this view prevailed, we should never have possessed a national drama. Little as Sidney could imagine it,



Corpus Christi College, Cambridge

From Logan's "*Cantabrigia Illustrata*," 1688

he was writing on the brink of a revolution, initiated by several men of genius who were writing nearly at the same time as himself, and especially by one whose first play, it is probable, appeared in the year after he had yielded up his breath at Zutphen. The special importance of CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE as a regenerator of the English drama induces us to name him first, though with some slight dislocation of chronology.

**Christopher Marlowe**, the son of a shoemaker, was born at Canterbury in February 1564, two months before Shakespeare. He was educated at the Canterbury grammar school, and afterwards at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, to which he was probably elected on a foundation of Archbishop Parker's. He

*Christopher  
Marlowe*

probably made his translation of Ovid's *Amores* while at college, and proceeded to London upon taking his B. A. degree in 1583, since his *Tamburlaine*, which could not have been written without some practical acquaintance with theatrical society and dramatic matters, cannot be later than 1587. The story is chiefly taken from Thomas Fortescue's *Foreste*, a translation from the Spanish of Pedro de Mexia. It is remarkable that there is but one piece of direct evidence—a casual allusion by a contemporary—of Marlowe's authorship of this popular play, from which the greatness of the Elizabethan drama dates, but the internal evidence is conclusive. *Faustus* was probably produced in 1588, since a ballad apparently founded upon it was printed early in the following year. *The Jew of Malta* may be two years later, and *Edward II.*, the most regular of Marlowe's plays, two years later still. A tragedy on the story of Dido, probably an early and discarded work, was completed and published after Marlowe's death by Thomas Nash; he was author or part-author of *The Massacre of Paris*, an occasional piece hastily got up on contemporary transactions in France; and may have had a hand in *Titus Andronicus* and *Henry VI.* His unfinished paraphrase of Musæus's *Hero and Leander*, and his blank verse translation of the first book of Lucan's *Pharsalia*, were entered for publication in September 1593, but not published for some years afterwards. The former was completed by Chapman. At the period of the entry Marlowe had been dead nearly four months. He had always been noted as a freethinker, and in May 1593 expressions used by or imputed to him attracted the notice of the Privy Council, who issued a warrant for his arrest. He was then at Chislehurst, but avoided apprehension, though withdrawing no further than Deptford, where, on June 1, he was killed in a tavern brawl. If there was any judicial investigation of the circumstances it has not been preserved, and it is now impossible to decide between conflicting rumours. Heavy imputations were made against Marlowe's moral character by an acquaintance named Banes, but no great credit can be given them when it is considered that Marlowe had no opportunity of vindicating himself, and that Banes was hanged not long afterwards. It is not likely that Marlowe was a very strict liver, but it is certain that he obtained the regard of Raleigh, Chapman, and Sir Thomas Walsingham, and a peculiar note of affection is traceable in most of the references made to him by contemporaries.

The great Italian poet Carducci, penetrated with admiration for the genius of Shakespeare, but not having attained to the recognition of his consummate art, calls him the English Æschylus, the very title by which English criticism has with more propriety designated Marlowe. The character bestowed upon Shakespeare by Voltaire and writers of the French classical school would have suited Marlowe very fairly. The great characteristic of his genius is audacity: he insists on dealing with the most illustrious persons, the strongest situations, and the most tempestuous passions. The great drawback to such manifestations of tragic force is the tendency to rant and hyperbole. Marlowe does not escape extravagance, but his bombast offends less than milder examples in less animated writers, for it never, as with these, suggests the suspicion of affectation. When *Tamburlaine* reproaches the captive monarchs yoked to his chariot:

Holla, ye pampered jades of Asia,  
What, can ye draw but twenty miles a day?

or Guise thus symbolises his dauntless ambition :

Set me to scale the high pyramides,  
And thereon set the diadem of France ;  
I'll either rend it with my nails to  
nought,  
Or mount the top with my aspiring  
wings,  
Although my downfall be the deepest  
hell :

we feel that they are but speaking  
as the men conceived by Marlowe  
must have spoken, and that he is  
merely fulfilling his promise to his  
audience :

From jiggling veins of rhyming mother-  
wits,  
And such conceits as clownage keeps  
in pay,  
We'll lead you to the stately tent of  
war ;  
Where you shall hear the Scythian  
Tamburlaine  
Threatening the world with high as-  
tounding terms,  
And scourging kingdoms with his con-  
quering sword.

Tamburlaine is great enough  
and proud enough to speak the  
speeches set down for him, and  
Faustus is wretched enough to  
justify the utmost conceivable in-  
tensity of language. It was other-  
wise when Marlowe went to the  
same extremes with the character  
of a Jewish merchant.

*Tamburlaine* is rather epical  
than dramatic. There is, properly  
speaking, no plot ; the action is  
terminated by Tamburlaine's nat-  
ural death, and the play is but  
the register of his conquests. There is no attempt at the nice delineation  
of character : the personages are mostly mere soldiers or feeble monarchs,  
men of steel or men of straw. The one interesting figure is that of Tambur-  
laine himself, the unconscious foreshadowing of Nietzsche's "Overman."  
In weaker hands than Marlowe's Tamburlaine would have been as incredible



[Statue]

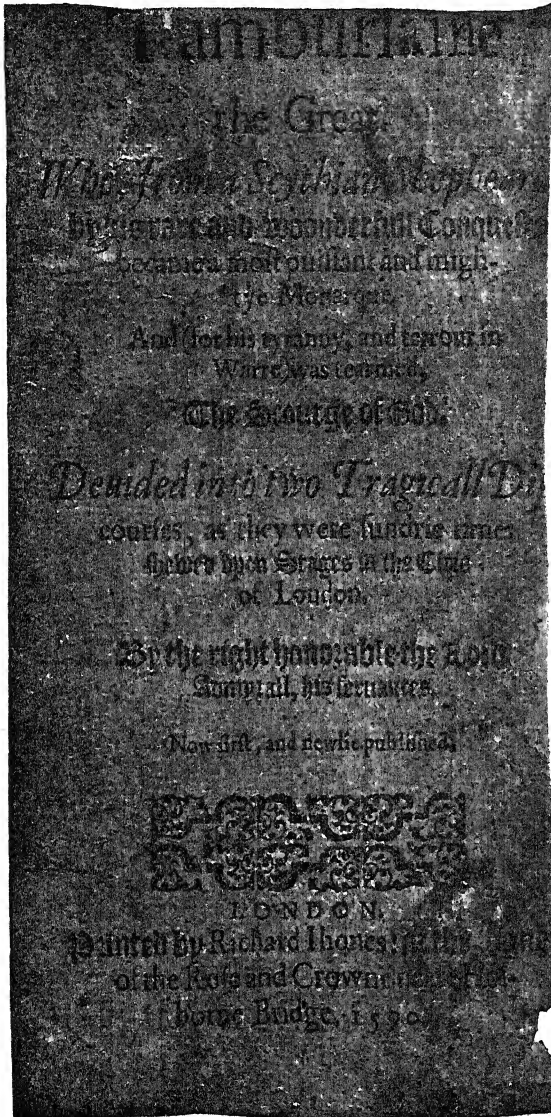
[Canterbury, England]

Memorial to Marlowe at Canterbury

From the statue by Onslow Ford

"Tambur-  
laine"

as the Moors and Moguls of Dryden's heroic plays; but he is saved by his sincerity, and the touch of humility which instructs him that amid all his triumphs he is but the instrument of a higher Power:



Title-page of "Tamburlaine the Great," 1590

From the copy at Oxford

There is a God, full of revenging wrath,  
From whom the thunder and the lightning breaks,  
Whose scourge I am, and him will I obey.

He is by no means inaccessible to the softer emotions, but his love-speeches are "battered thunder":

Proud fury and intolerable fit  
That dares torment the body  
of my love,  
And scourge the scourge of  
the immortal gods!  
Now are those spheres, where  
Cupid used to sit,  
Wounding the world with wonder  
and with love,  
Sadly supplied with pale and  
ghastly death,  
Whose darts do pierce the  
centre of my soul.  
Her sacred beauty hath en-  
chanted Heaven;  
And had she lived before the  
siege of Troy,  
Helen, whose beauty sum-  
moned Greece to arms,  
And drew a thousand ships  
to Tenedos,  
Had not been named in Ho-  
mer's *Iliad*.

The other speakers are less hyperbolic, but employ the same magnificent figurative style, which will not appear other than appropriate when it is con-

sidered that they are mostly kings. Thus, the eagle becomes in the mouth of Orchanes,

The princely fowl, that in her wings  
Carries the fearful thunderbolts of Jove.

Sigismund's description of his army vies with the grandeur of the panorama unfolded by Satan from the specular mount in *Paradise Regained*:

But now, Ocreanes, view my royal host,  
 That hides these plains, and seems as vast and wide  
 As doth the desert of Arabia  
 To those that stand on Bagdet's lofty tower ;  
 Or as the ocean to the traveller  
 That rests upon the snowy Apennines ;  
 And tell me whether I should stoop so low,  
 Or treat of peace with the Natolian king.

Passages like these, of which there are multitudes, show how entirely new a spirit had come into the English drama with Marlowe. Peele indeed had shown that poetry might be combined with playwriting, but his treatment was not of the kind that fills theatres. It excited neither pity nor terror, while Marlowe provided his audiences abundantly and even superabundantly with both. Much of his success was also due to his great improvements in blank verse, whose artistic merits might pass unappreciated, but which must have produced an immediately recognisable effect in augmenting the compass of stage declamation. The nature of the modifications introduced by him is ably and accurately stated by Addington Symonds, but it need not be supposed that Marlowe scanned his lines as he wrote them, or afterwards. He was simply one endowed with a fine instinct for verbal music, whose feeling and whose metre naturally and inevitably chimed together. Hence the infinite variety of his verse, as pause and stress are continually changing to suit the emotion to be expressed. In *Tamburlaine*, indeed, the lines too frequently end with a pause, but each has elasticity within itself. The superb resonance and solemn roll so frequently occurring have a deeper root in the mental constitution of the man.

*Marlowe's im-  
 provements in  
 versification*

Tamburlaine would be the *ne plus ultra* of braggadocios if he were not generally able to make his words good. But he is a thinker as well as a conqueror, and embodies the other side of his creator Marlowe's nature, the yearning for infinite knowledge no less than infinite power :

The thirst of reign and sweetness of a crown  
 That caused the eldest son of heavenly Ops  
 To thrust his doting father from his chair  
 And place himself in the empyreal Heaven  
 Moved me to manage arms against thy State.  
 What better precedent than mighty Jove ?  
 Nature, that framed us of four elements  
 Warring within our breasts for regiment,  
 Doth teach us all to have aspiring minds ;  
 Our souls, whose faculties can comprehend  
 The wondrous architecture of the world,  
 And measure every wandering planet's course,  
 Still climbing after knowledge infinite,  
 And always moving as the restless spheres,  
 Will us to wear ourselves, and never rest,  
 Until we reach the ripest fruit of all,  
 That perfect bliss and sole felicity,  
 The sweet fruition of an earthly crown.

Tamburlaine's *summum bonum* seems a sad anti-climax to his spirit of "*Faustus*"

aspiration, but is necessitated by the dramatic situation, as he is excusing himself to the King of Persia for having taken the liberty to dethrone him. Marlowe's next play was to prove for how much intellectual conquests counted with him. It is his *Faustus*, founded on an English translation of the German chap-book in which the history of Faustus is narrated. The chap-book is closely followed, and as Marlowe has not, like Goethe, invented an underplot to knit the action together, the play is little but a succession of disconnected scenes. Faustus appears bemoaning the uncertainty of human knowledge, and the miserable results which the learned professions yield at their best :

Philosophy is odious and obscure ;  
Both law and physic are for petty wits ;  
Divinity is basest of the three.



Woodcut of Faustus and Mephistopheles

*From Marlowe's "Faustus," 1631*

Bacon at the same time was thinking much the same thing, but he betook himself to the investigation of Nature. Faustus must have a shorter cut :

These metaphysics of magicians  
And necromantic books are heavenly  
Lines, circles, scenes, letters and characters  
Aye, these are those that Faustus most desires.  
O what a world of profit and delight,  
O, power, of honour, of omnipotence,  
Is promised to the studious artisan !

Faustus obtains the object of his desire, and now the incurable vice of all dramas founded on infernal compacts appears : he does and can do nothing with it. He has been pleasing himself with thoughts of the tasks to which he will set his spirits :

I'll have them fly to India for gold,  
 Ransack the ocean for orient pearl,  
 And search all corners of the new-found world  
 For pleasant fruits and princely delicates ;  
 I'll have them read me strange philosophy,  
 And tell the secrets of all foreign kings ;  
 I'll have them wall all Germany with brass,  
 And make swift Rhine circle fair Wittenberg ;  
 I'll levy soldiers with the coin they bring,  
 And chase the Prince of Parma from our land.

Unquestionably this is precisely what Faustus in his supposed situation would have done, but is precisely what he does not do, for the conclusive reason that magic transcends the resources of the stage. He follows the course prescribed for him by the chap-book, and, though exercising supernatural power in a small way, finds nothing worthy of himself to be done until he calls up Helen,

Fairer than the evening air  
 Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars.

Except for an occasional outburst of magnificent poetry like this, the poet's power is reserved for the catastrophe, when, indeed, he surpasses himself :

The stars move still, time runs, the clock will strike,  
 The Devil will come, and Faustus must be damned.  
 O, I'll leap up to my God ! Who pulls me down ?  
 See, see where Christ's blood streams in the firmament !  
 One drop would save my soul—half a drop, ah, my Christ !  
 Ah, rend not my heart for naming of my Christ !  
 Yet will I call on him : O spare me, Lucifer !—  
 Where is it now ? 'tis gone, and see where God  
 Stretcheth out his arm, and bends his ireful brows !  
 Mountains and hills come, come and fall on me,  
 And hide me from the heavy wrath of God !  
 No ! no !  
 Then will I headlong run into th' earth ;  
 Earth gape ! O no ! it will not harbour me !  
 You stars that reigned at my nativity,  
 Whose influence hath allotted death and hell,  
 Now draw up Faustus like a foggy mist  
 Into the entrails of yon labouring clouds,  
 That when they vomit forth into the air,  
 My limbs may issue from their smoky mouths,  
 So that my soul may but ascend to Heaven.  
 Ah ! half the hour is past ! 'twill all be past anon !

Milton, who must have recognised in Marlowe a spirit in many respects congenial to his own, probably took from these latter lines the idea of Satan being sped on his inauspicious voyage by—

The strong rebuff of some tumultuous cloud,  
 Instinct with fire and nitre.

He is also indebted to his predecessor for a finer thought. The famous "Which way I turn is Hell, myself am Hell," must be a reminiscence conscious or unconscious of Marlowe :

*Faustus.* How comes it then that thou art out of hell ?  
*Mephistopheles* Why this is hell, nor am I out of it.

"*The Jew of  
 Malta*"

Having thus depicted the passion for boundless power and the passion for boundless knowledge, it was natural that Marlowe in his next play, *The Jew of Malta* (1591 or 1592), should depict the passion for boundless wealth. Had this drama but proceeded as it began it would have rivalled anything he had previously written. The poetical side of money-getting was never so picturesquely set forth as in the opening soliloquy of Barabas :

As for those Sanaites,<sup>1</sup> and the men of Uz,  
 That bought my Spanish oils and wines of Greece,  
 Here have I pursed their paltry silverlings  
 Fie ! What a trouble 'tis to count this trash !  
 Well fare the Arabians, who so richly pay  
 The things they traffic for with wedge of gold,  
 Whereof a man may easily in a day  
 Tell that which may maintain him all his life.  
 The needy groom that never fingered groat  
 Would make a miracle of this much coin.  
 But he whose steel-barred coffers are crammed full,  
 And all his lifetime hath been tired,<sup>2</sup>  
 Wearying his fingers' ends with telling it,  
 Would in his age be loth to labour so,  
 And for a pound to sweat himself to death.  
 Give me the merchants of the Indian mines  
 That trade in metal of the purest mould ;  
 The wealthy Moor that in the Eastern rocks  
 Without control can pick his riches up,  
 And in his house heap pearls like pebble-stones,  
 Receive them free, and sell them by the weight :  
 Bags of fiery opals, sapphires, amethysts,  
 Jacinths, hard topaz, grass-green emeralds,  
 Beauteous rubies, sparkling diamonds,  
 And seld-seen costly stones of so great price  
 As one of them indifferently rated,  
 And of a carat of this quantity,  
 May serve, in peril of calamity,  
 To ransom great kings from captivity  
 This is the ware wherein consists my wealth,  
 And thus methinks should men of judgment frame  
 Their means of traffic from the vulgar trade,  
 And as their wealth increaseth, so inclose  
 Infinite riches in a little room

We may exclaim with Goethe in a different connection :

Doth not Sir Mammon gloriously illuminate  
 His palace ?

The ensuing scenes are highly spirited. Barabas has hardly finished

<sup>1</sup> The old editions have "Samintes", modern editions, "Samnites," until that of Mr Bullen, who reads "Sabans," because the Book of Job represents the Sabæans as neighbours of "the man of Uz." Ingenious as the emendation is, it appears to us too violent ; "Sabans" could hardly be misprinted "Samintes." *Sana* was the ancient capital of Sabæa, as it is now of Yemen, and was known to the Western world by the account of Ludovico di Varthema, who visited it at the beginning of the sixteenth century

<sup>2</sup> To be pronounced as a trisyllable



vaunting ere he is summoned before the Knights of St. John, the lords of Malta. The Turks have sent in a claim for arrears of tribute, and the Knights are at their wits' end how to meet it, until a happily inspired person suggests that there are Jews in the land. Barabas and his countrymen are called in and indented upon for half their possessions, most reasonably, in the Knights' opinion, seeing that—

Through sufferance of your  
hateful lives,  
Who stand accused in the sight  
of Heaven,  
These taxes and afflictions are  
befallen.—

Barabas, recalcitrating, is deprived of the whole, including ten thousand Portugal pieces and many priceless gems which he has providently concealed in his house, but which are unavailable on account of the mansion having been appropriated for a nunnery. His daughter Abigail, by her father's instructions, enters the convent simulating conversion, but in reality to carry off the treasure. She helps Barabas to his gold, but becomes a Christian in good earnest, and from this point the father goes mad, and the play along with him. The least of Barabas's crimes is to poison his daughter, and he ends by being precipitated into a boiling caldron which he had prepared for a Turkish prince. Some gleams of human feeling break through, and the ferocity

produced by a sense of insufferable wrong is powerfully rendered, but in the main it is painful to see the waste of so fine a situation, which in Shakespeare's hands would have provided delicious scenes of comedy to relieve the intensity of the tragic action, and Barabas would have been no less human than Shylock. But Marlowe's comedy is farce, and he knew not how to paint



# The troublesome

*raigne and lamentable death of*

Edward the second, King of

*England: with the tragickall*

*fall of proud Morimer:*

And also the life and death of *Peirs Gaucstoun,*

*the great Earle of Cornewall, and mighty*

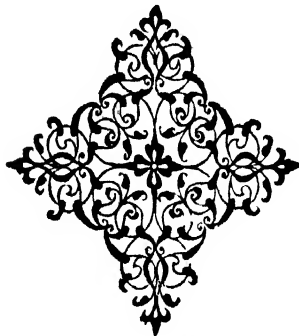
*fauorite of king Edward the second, as it was*

*publicly acted by the right honorable*

*the Earle of Pembroke his*

*seruantes,*

*Written by Chri. Marlow Gent.*



*Imprinted at London by Richard Bradocke,*

*for William Iones dwelling neere Holbourne conduit,*

*at the signe of the Gunne. 1 5 9 8.*

Title-page of Marlowe's "Edward II.," 1598

woman. The plot of *The Jew of Malta*, moreover, seems to be his own invention, and he needed the restraining influence of a prescribed subject; otherwise the impetuosity of his genius hurries him into extravagance.

Marlowe's next appearance showed that the eclipse was but temporary, for *Edward II.* (1593) is an excellent play. It wants the grand conception of

his preceding dramas, of which the subject would not allow, but the action is better managed, being neither capricious as in *Tamburlaine*, nor slack and disconnected as in *Faustus*, nor luridly melodramatic as in *The Jew of Malta*. History is in general faithfully followed. The weak and amiable character of Edward, doting with irrational fondness on his favourite, is well depicted, though there is nothing of that spirit of divination which, in the similar character of Richard II, enables Shakespeare to penetrate so far below the visible surface of things. Marlowe draws Edward as any one would have endeavoured to draw him, though few would have succeeded so well; and the pathos of the dismal scenes of Edward's fall and murder is that which every writer must have essayed, though few could have made it so poignant. There is more

originality in an exquisite stroke of pathos near the end, where Edward III. orders the imprisonment of his mother.

*Queen Isab.* Nay, to my death, for too long have I lived,

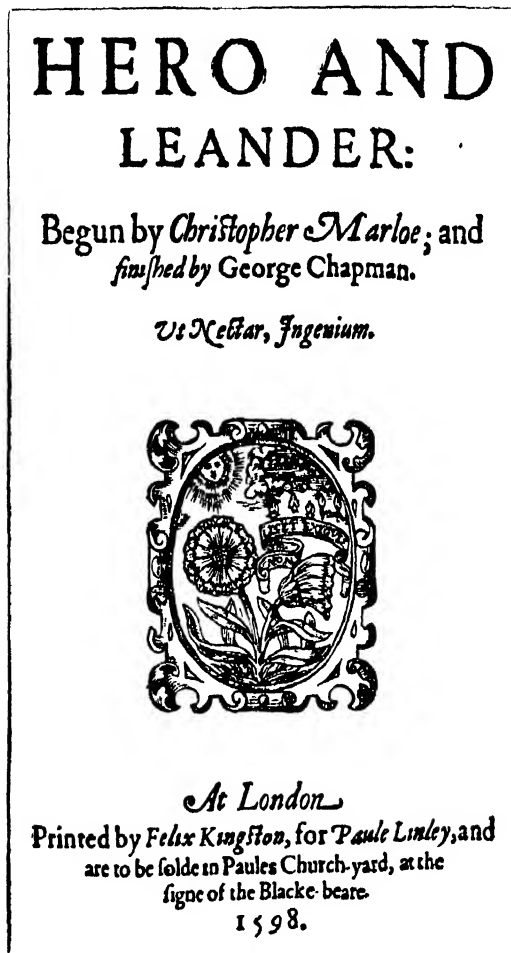
Whenas my son thinks to abridge my days

*King Edw.* Away with her, her words enforce these tears,

And I shall pity her if she speak again

"*Hero and  
Leander*"

Marlowe's solitary lyric, *Come Live with Me and be My Love*, is too familiar for quotation, but we cannot pass over his unfinished paraphrase of the *Hero and Leander* of Musæus, completed after his death by Chapman. It is a



Title-page of Marlowe's "Hero and Leander," 1598

marvellous transposition of Greek music into an Elizabethan key ; it scintillates with conceits, strokes of *esprit*, and touches of description unimaginable by even so late a writer as Musæus ; yet though the simplicity is gone, the charm remains. The versification also is remarkable, and is perhaps to this day the best pattern we have for the translation of Greek hexameter :

He kneeled, but unto her devoutly prayed ;  
 Chaste Hero to herself thus softly said,  
 " Were I the saint he worships, I would hear him " ;  
 And, as she spake these words, came somewhat near him ;  
 He started up ; she blushed as one ashamed,  
 Wherewith Leander much more was inflamed.  
 He touched her hand ; in touching it she trembled,  
 Love deeply grounded hardly is dissembled.  
 These lovers parleyed by the touch of hands :  
 True love is mute, and oft amazed stands.  
 Thus while dumb signs their yielding hearts entangled,  
 The air with sparks of living fire was spangled,  
 And night, deep drenched in misty Acheron,  
 Heaved up her head, and half the world upon  
 Breathed darkness forth (dark night is Cupid's day).  
 And now begins Leander to display  
 Love's holy fire with words, with sighs and tears  
 Which like sweet music entered Hero's ears :  
 And yet at every word she turned aside,  
 And always cut him off as he replied.

Marlowe is the only dramatic poet of his age who can for a moment be measured with Shakespeare. If—as they probably would—added years had brought the philosophic mind to one to whom profound thought was already no stranger, he would have been in many respects a formidable rival. He could never have approached Shakespeare's delineation of female character, or his insight into human nature in general, or his illimitable sway over the supernatural, or his infallible accuracy. Nor, with his deficiency in humour, could any comic masterpiece have proceeded from his pen. He might have addicted himself principally to English historical drama, which Shakespeare, easy-tempered as Sophocles, would have conceded to him : we should have had unurmised exercises of Shakespeare's powers in other directions, but we should have lost Falstaff. Emulation and example might have exalted the earth-born Titan to a seat among the gods, but it was not to be :

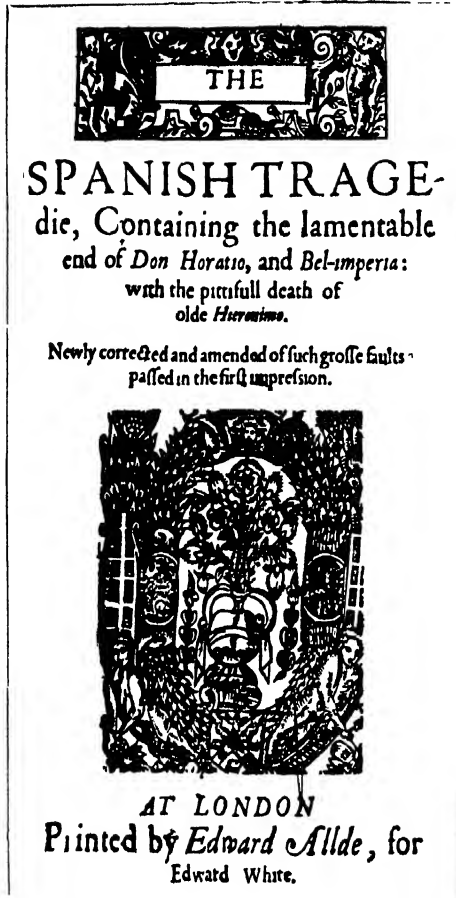
*Marlowe and  
Shakespeare*

Cut is the branch that might have grown full straight,  
 And burn'd is Apollo's laurel bough.

THOMAS KYD (1559–1595 ?) may be regarded as an understudy of Marlowe, whose freethinking views he was accused of sharing. The view, however that he wrote his *Spanish Tragedy* in emulation of *The Jew of Malta* is irreconcilable with dates, for the *Tragedy* was not produced later than 1588 and the *Jew* certainly was. It is more probable that Marlowe was allured by the great success of Kyd's tragedy into spoiling his own by spicing it with horrors. Outdo Kyd in this line he could not : this is the Ghost's complacent catalogue of the catastrophes of the *dramatis personæ* :

*Thomas Kyd*

Horatio murdered in his father's bower,  
 Wild Serberine by Pedringano slain,  
 False Pedringano hanged by quaint device,  
 Fair Isabella by herself misdone,  
 Prince Balthazar by Bell-Imperia stabbed,  
 The Duke of Castile and his wicked son  
 Both done to death by old Jeronimo,  
 My Bell-Imperia fallen, as Dido fell,  
 And good Jeronimo slain by himself



George Peele

Title-page of Kyd's "Spanish Tragedy"

wit, and a spendthrift, characters which he filled during his London life. Very little, however, is definitely known of him, though a fair general inference as to his character may be derived from the admonitions of the repentant Greene, and the publication under his name of a volume of jests, few of which can have actually proceeded from him. In his writings he appears the scholar, and a man of refined and amiable feeling. Except for a fling at Gabriel Harvey in defence of his friend Nash, he took no part in the literary controversies of his day, and was "no man's enemy but his own." He was dead when Meres wrote in 1598.

Melodramatic as the *Spanish Tragedy* is, the plot is better constructed than that of any previous English tragedy. The edition of 1602 has extensive additions in a much superior style and as Henslowe's accounts show that Ben Jonson about this time received payment for making additions to the play, they are probably by him, though they bear little resemblance to his usual manner. Kyd was an industrious pamphleteer and translator, and is the reputed author of two other tragedies of little importance. It is extremely probable that he wrote the old play of *Hamlet*, now lost, upon which Shakespeare's tragedy was founded.

**George Peele** (1558 ?-1597 ?) was the son of the clerk of Christ's Hospital, where he received his education, and whence he proceeded to Pembroke College, Oxford, and from thence to Christ Church. His University reputation was that of a poet, a

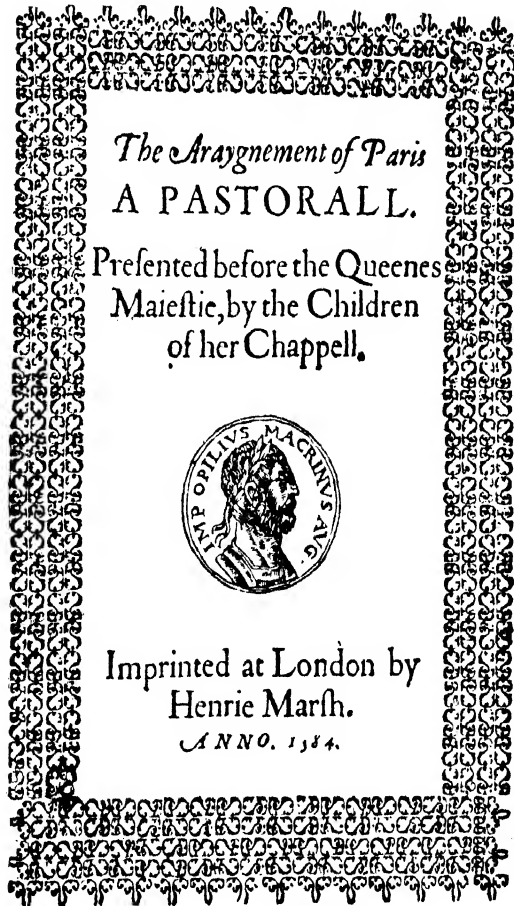
Peele in some measure anticipated Marlowe by his improvement in the modulation of blank verse, which is fully developed in his first play, *The Arraignment of Paris* (probably 1581). He does not attain to Marlowe's "mighty line," but he shows that blank verse may be sweet and various. The piece itself, as well as the later *Old Wives' Tale* (probably 1593), exhibits Peele as the introducer into England of romantic and fanciful comedy, a precursor of Shakespeare in the *Midsummer Night's Dream*. The idea of *The Arraignment of Paris* is ingenious. Paris is indicted for having improperly awarded the apple to Venus, whereas it ought to have been bestowed upon "Eliza," otherwise "Zabeta," otherwise Queen Elizabeth. Diana retries the case, and "Eliza" gets the apple. Elizabeth's perfections are thus glowingly celebrated :

She giveth laws of justice and  
of peace ;  
And on her head, as fits her  
fortune best,  
She wears a wreath of laurel,  
gold, and palm ;  
Her robes of purple and of  
scarlet dye ;  
Her veil of white, as best befits  
a maid :  
Her ancestors live in the House  
of Fame ;  
She giveth arms of happy victory,  
And flowers to deck her lions  
crowned with gold.  
This peerless nymph, whom  
heaven and earth beloves,  
This paragon, this only, this is she  
In whom do meet so many gifts  
in one,  
On whom our country gods so  
often gaze  
In honour of whose name the  
Muses sigh.

Fancy and picturesque description are at their best throughout, and the subject does not require the gift of delineating character, in which Peele was so deficient. The pleadings of the goddesses with Paris for the apple evidently gave hints to Tennyson for his *Enone*.

*The Old Wives' Tale*, if infinitely less brilliant, is remarkable for the great amount of miscellaneous folk-lore which it holds in solution, and as a foreshadowing of Milton's *Comus*. The two brothers who come to deliver their

*Peele's Plays*



Title-page of Peele's "Arraignment of Paris," 1584

sister from the enchanter are clearly the rude originals of the corresponding personages in Milton; and Peele might have supplied his successor with something more than a hint if he had treated his subject more seriously. He is evidently far from realising the poetic capabilities of the fairy tale, upon which he has stumbled by accident. Had he wrought more in the spirit of an artist, he might have been the Tieck or Gozzi of his age. The irregularities of his life avenged themselves upon his poetry: being always needy, he was always hasty and fitful. If ever he wrote to please himself it was in his *David and Bethsabe*, weak in action and character, but full of charming poetry, of whose constant lusciousness we almost tire in default of the relief of vigorous action:

Come, gentle Zephyr, tricked with those perfumes  
That erst in Eden sweetened Adam's love,  
And stroke my bosom with thy silken fan,  
This shade, sun-proof, is yet no proof for thee;  
Thy body, smoother than this waveless spring,  
And purer than the substance of the same,  
Can creep through that his lances cannot pierce;  
Thou and thy sister, soft and sacred Air,  
Goddess of Life, and governess of health,  
Keep every fountain fresh and arbour sweet;  
No brazen gate her passage can repulse,  
Nor bushy thicket bar thy subtle breath,  
Then deck thee with thy loose delightful robes,  
And on thy wings bring delicate perfumes,  
To play the wanton with us through the leaves

In his other tragedies, *Edward I* and *The Battle of Alcazar*, Peele essayed a department of the drama for which his genius did not qualify him. Both are occasional pieces, and *Edward I*. is disgraced by libels on one of our most illustrious Queens, Eleanor of Castile, who, partly indeed upon the authority of an ancient ballad, suffers for the unpopularity of her countrymen. There is, however, a fine passage on the glories of England:

Illustrious England, ancient seat of kings,  
Whose chivalry hath royalsed thy fame,  
That sounding bravely through terrestrial vale,  
Proclaiming conquests, spoils, and victories,  
Rings glorious echoes through the farthest world;  
What warlike nation, trained in feats of arms,  
What barbarous people, stubborn or untamed,  
What climate under the meridian signs,  
Or frozen zone under his brumal plague,<sup>1</sup>  
Erst have not quaked and trembled at the name  
Of Britain and her mighty conquerors?  
Her neighbour-nations, as Scotland, Denmark, France,  
Awed with their deeds and jealous of her arms,  
Have begged defensive and offensive leagues  
Thus Europe, rich and mighty in her kings,  
Hath feared brave England, dreadful in her Kings,  
And now, to eternise Albion's champions,  
Equivalent with Trojans' ancient fame,

<sup>1</sup> Quarter of the compass.

Comes lovely Edward from Jerusalem,  
 Veering before the wind, ploughing the sea,  
 His stretch'd sails filled with the breath of men,  
 That through the world admire his manliness.

Much of Peele's dramatic work is in rhyme. The fourteen-syllable couplet which, in common with other early dramatists, he frequently affects, is as unsatisfactory in his hands as in those of all other writers, but in heroic rhyme he steers an even course between the licence of such a poem as *Sordello* and the monotony of the regulation couplet, and while vying with the richness of Keats does not, like Keats in his earlier writings, allow his matter to be prescribed by his rhyme. The following is from *The Arraignment of Paris*:

Not Iris in her pride and bravery  
 Adorns her arch with such variety ;  
 Nor doth the milk-white way, in frosty night,  
 Appear so fair and beautiful in sight  
 As does these fields and groves and sweetest bowers,  
 Bestrewed and decked with parti-coloured flowers.  
 Along the bubbling brooks and silver glide  
 That at the bottom do in silence slide,  
 The water-flowers and lilies on the banks,  
 Like blazing comets, burgeon all in ranks ;  
 Under the hawthorn and the poplar tree  
 Where sacred Phœbe may delight to be,  
 The primrose and the purple hyacinth,  
 The dainty violet, and the wholesome minth,  
 The double daisy, and the cowslip, queen  
 Of summer flowers, do overpeer the green ;  
 And round about the valley as ye pass,  
 Ye may ne see for peeping flowers the grass,  
 That well the mighty Juno, and the rest,  
 May boldly think to be a welcome guest  
 On Ida hills, when, to approve the thing,  
 The Queen of Flowers prepares a second spring.

An important part of Peele's literary work, verging on the dramatic, was the composition of pageants, and poetical speeches to be delivered or perused on public occasions. Such are his Address, in extremely spirited and sonorous blank verse, to Drake and Norris on their expedition to Portugal in 1589, and his congratulations to Essex upon his return. The following beautiful lines upon the retirement of Sir Henry Lee from his office of Champion to the Queen are appended to *Polyhymnia, describing the immediate Triumph at Tilt before her Majesty on the 17th of November last past* (1590):

His golden locks Time hath to silver turned :  
 O Time too swift, O swiftness never ceasing !  
 His youth 'gainst time and age hath ever spurned,  
 But spurned in vain ; youth waneth by increasing.  
 Beauty, strength, youth are flowers but fading seen ;  
 Duty, faith, love, are roots, and ever green.

His helmet soon shall make an hive for bees,  
 And lovers' sonnets turn to holy psalms ;

A man-at-arms must serve upon his knecs,  
 And feed on prayers, which are Old Age his aims ;  
 But though from Court to cottage he depart,  
 His saint is sure of his unspotted heart

And when he saddest sits in homely cell,  
 He'll teach his swains this carol for a song  
 Blest be the hearts that wish my sovereign well,  
 Cursed be the soul that think her any wrong !  
 Goddess, allow this aged man his right,  
 To be your beadsman now that was your knight.

Greene's  
 "Friar  
 Bacon"

With two exceptions, the plays ascribed to Robert Greene add little to his reputation, and one of the two, *George-a-Greene*, is of doubtful authenticity. *Friar Bacon*, however, is certainly his, and is a very good piece in its way. It dates from 1589, and seems to have been produced in consequence of the popularity of Marlowe's *Faustus*, to which it may be regarded as a humorous appendix. Greene is no more comparable to Marlowe than Miles, Bacon's servant, who, before departing for the infernal regions, makes, like Bacchus in Aristophanes, particular inquiry respecting the inns, is to the grand and tragic figure of Faustus. Yet below, as above, there are many mansions, and there is ample room for Greene's broad comedy, mingled as it is with notes of a higher strain. The old chap-book, one of the most diverting of its class, is closely followed. There is ample variety of action, and all the dramatic motives are attractive in their way, the young prince's attachment to fair Margaret, the keeper's daughter, his self-denial in renouncing her, Bacon's professional pride and patriotic emotion, his humiliation and repentance, and the humours of friends, serving-men, and inferior conjurers. This description of a rustic beauty is really idyllic.

Into the milkhouse went I with the maid,  
 And there amongst the cream-bowls she did shine  
 As Pallas 'mongst her princely huswifery.  
 She turned her smock over her lily arms,  
 And dived them into milk to run her cheese ;  
 But, whiter than the milk, her crystal skin,  
 Chequered with lines of azure, made her <sup>1</sup> blush  
 That art or nature durst bring for compare

Lyly as a  
 dramatist

The uncertainties of dates must render it a question whether the first considerable representation of the fanciful drama in England was Peele or John Lyly, whom we have already encountered as the author of *Euphues*. Peele's *Arraignment of Paris* and Lyly's *Alexander and Campaspe* and *Sappho and Phaon* were all printed in the same year, 1584, but may all have appeared a few years earlier. *The Woman in the Moon*, printed as Lyly's in his lifetime, seems to claim to be his first dramatic attempt, but his authorship is doubtful. Circumstances directed him into a different path from the other dramatists of his day ; his plays, composed by a courtier for a Court, were further written to be acted by the children of St Paul's : it was, therefore, necessary that they should be light and free from overwhelming emotion, and not less so that, even

<sup>1</sup> Every other woman



though touching on themes which would not now be brought to the notice of children, their gaiety should be the gaiety of innocence. Lyly has solved these problems very successfully. *Alexander and Campaspe* is called "a tragicall comedy," but has neither agitation nor suspense. Except for the cynic Diogenes, more bark than bite, all glides pleasantly along, and the interest is chiefly derived from the collision of such various characters. Alexander is the hero in undress, Apelles the accomplished but honest courtier. Lyly has made but little of the opportunity he had for delineating the conflict between love and ambition in the breast of Campaspe; but, even if he had the power, this scarcely entered into his plan. What especially distinguishes his work from his predecessors is his proficiency in light and nimble repartee, as in the scene when Apelles experiences the honour and embarrassment of a royal pupil:

*Alex.* Lend me thy pencil, Apelles: I will paint, and thou shalt judge.

*Apel.* Here.

*Alex.* The coal<sup>1</sup> breaks.

*Apel.* You lean too hard.

*Alex.* Now it blacks not.

*Apel.* You lean too soft.

*Alex.* This is awry.

*Apel.* Your eye goeth not with your hand.

*Alex.* Now it is worse.

*Apel.* Your hand goeth not with your mind.

*Alex.* Nay, if all be too hard or soft—so many rules and regards that one's hand, one's eye, one's mind must all draw together—I had rather be setting of a battle than blotting of a board. But how have I done here?

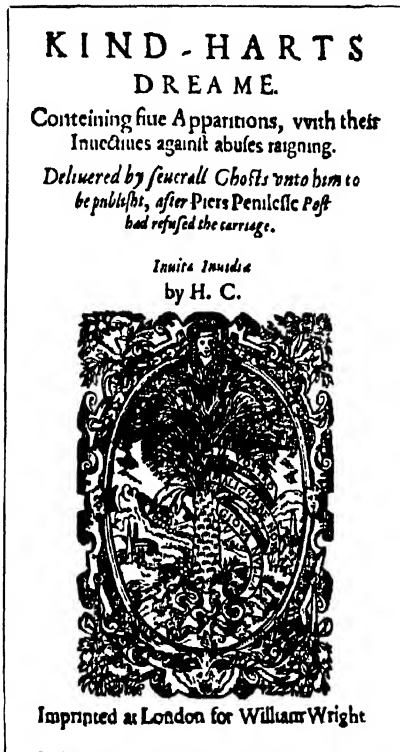
*Apel.* Like a king.

*Alex.* I think so, but nothing more unlike a painter.

*Sappho and Phaon* may be described as a romance dramatised. *Galatea* turns upon the idea, pretty but perilous if treated by a writer of less than Lyly's delicacy, of the mutual passion of two maidens, which can only obtain fruition by metamorphosing one of them into a youth. Venus takes the matter in hand, and the curtain falls on the pair marching together to the temple where the charm is to be wrought, ignorant upon which of the two it is to take effect. *Endymion* and *Midas* are pastorals with a political purpose. In the former (1579?) the Maiden Queen, who appears as Cynthia, having got beyond the age of coquetry, is complimented upon her unwedded state. There is more pith and more poetry in Shakespeare's "fair vestal thronéd in the West" than in the whole of Lyly, who nevertheless deserves the praise of a graceful imagination, which he seems to have exerted in the interest of Leicester. Midas is Philip of Spain, endowed with the golden touch as a symbol of the wealth of the Indies, and with ass's ears, ostensibly for preferring Pan's music to Apollo's, but really for his invasion of the island realm of Lesbos. He was probably a better judge of poetry than of music, for Pan's song is as much before Apollo's as his pipe is inferior to Apollo's lyre:

<sup>1</sup> Charcoal.

Pan's Syrinx was a girl indeed,  
 Though now she's turned into a reed,  
 From that dear reed Pan's pipe doth come,  
 A pipe that strikes Apollo dumb,  
 Nor flute nor lute nor guttern can  
 So chant it as the pipe of Pan,  
 Cross-gartered swains and dairy girls,  
 With faces smug and round as pearls,  
 When Pan's shrill pipe begins to play,  
 With dancing wear out night and day.  
 The bagpipe's drone his hum lays by  
 When Pan sounds up his minstrelsy.  
 His minstrelsy! O base! This quill  
 Which at my mouth with wind I fill,  
 Puts me in mind, though her I miss,  
 That still my Syrinx' lips I kiss



Title-page of Chettle's "Kind Heart's Dream"

The death of Marlowe has already brought us beyond the dawn of Shakespeare, who in 1593 was very probably writing *Romco and Juliet* and *Richard III.* Lodge's *Marius and Sylla* and Nash's *Will Summers's Last Will* are insignificant. The other dramatic poets of eminence who were on the point of appearing belong to the Shakespearean epoch, if we except ANTHONY MUNDAY (1553-1633) and HENRY CHETLE (1560? -1607). These industrious playwrights (Chettle alone wrote thirteen plays by himself, and thirty-six in conjunction with others, but only one of the former and four of the latter are preserved) and who were not less industrious as pamphleteers, and in Munday's case in the translation of romances, worked so much in collaboration with each other and other poets that it is well-nigh impossible to allot to each his due. There can be little doubt, however, that the really beautiful portion of Chettle's *Patient Grissel* proceeds from his col-

league Dekker, and as he only had ten shillings for "mending" the first part of "Post Haste Munday's" *Robin Hood*, and the following charming verses alone would have been cheap at the price, they must be assigned to Munday:

Marian, thou seest, though courtly pleasures want,  
 Yet country sport in Sherwood is not scant:  
 For the soul-ravishing, delicious sound  
 Of instrumental music we have found

The wingéd quiristers with divers notes  
 Sent from their quaint recording pretty throats  
 On every branch that compasseth our bower,  
 Without command contenting us each hour :  
 For arras-hangings and rich tapestry  
 We have sweet nature's best embroidery :  
 For thy steel glass, wherein thou wont'st to look  
 Thy crystal eyes gaze in a crystal brook :  
 At Court a flower or two did deck thy head,  
 Now with whole garlands it is circled ;  
 For what we want in wealth, we have in flowers,  
 And what we lose in hall, we find in bowers.

The play was first performed in February 1599, shortly, as is probable before *As You Like It*, for which it may have afforded hints. *Historical Plays*

Another set of plays not to be entirely overlooked are the historical, all anonymous. One, *Lochrine*, was attributed to Shakespeare in his lifetime, not, assuredly, on the ground of its merits. Another, *Leir*, served as the groundwork for one of the greatest of his plays. Of the chronicle dramas from English history, *Edward III.* is by far the most important, and the under-plot of Edward and the Countess of Salisbury has been thought to betray the hand of Shakespeare. Shakespeare is but little indebted to the early plays on Henry V. and Richard III., but he has observed the dramatic economy of *The Troublesome Reign of King John* very exactly, although the diction is almost entirely his own. Although the language of the old play is in general but poor, it has passages suggesting that a superior writer may have had a hand in it. Such is the delineation of Fauconbridge's hesitation between the solid advantage of being acknowledged the son of one's reputed father and the lustre of illegitimate royal birth :

Methinks I hear a hollow echo sound,  
 That Philip is the son unto a king.  
 The whistling leaves upon the trembling trees  
 Whistle in concert I am Richard's son ;  
 The bubbling murmur of the water's fall  
 Records *Philippus Regis Filius*.  
 Birds in their flight make music with their wings,  
 Filling the air with glory of my birth :  
 Birds, bubbles, leaves, and mountains' echoes all  
 Ring in my ear that I am Richard's son.  
 Fond man ! ah, whither art thus carried ?  
 How are thy thoughts enwrapt in honour's heaven,  
 Forgetful what thou art, and whence thou camest ?  
 Thy father's land cannot maintain these thoughts :  
 These thoughts are far unfitting Fauconbridge ;  
 And well they may, for why ? this mounting mind  
 Doth soar too high to stoop to Fauconbridge.

It remains to mention a play differing in subject and style from any of the rest. This is *The Misfortunes of Arthur*, chiefly by Thomas Hughes of Gray's

<sup>1</sup> In all the editions this soliloquy is continued by six more lines, attributed to Fauconbridge. It seems to us clear that the first two are spoken by John, urging Fauconbridge to make up his mind and announce his decision without further ado ; and the remainder by Lady Fauconbridge, dissuading him from yielding up his estate.

Inn, and performed by members of the Inn before Queen Elizabeth in February 1588. It is remarkable, as shown by Mr. Cunliffe, for the great indebtedness of the author to Seneca, and possesses considerable literary merit, but none of the requisites of popularity. The contrast between the world-weary Arthur, sated with battle and victory, and almost ready to resign his crown to his usurping kinsman, and the fierce eager ambition of Mordred, is original and impressive.

## CHAPTER V

### SHAKESPEARE

WHEN the Greeks spoke of Homer, they did not always name him. They said *the* poet, certain that no vestige of doubt could exist as to the application of the description. Englishmen might thus speak of Shakespeare with no less security from misapprehension. In a literature eminent beyond most for the multitude of its great poets, many of whom may have excelled Shakespeare in this or that branch of art, not one could be selected as a possible rival to Shakespeare, and for this plain reason, that their excellence is particular, and his is universal. There is nothing within the compass of poetry in which he has not either achieved supremacy or shown that supremacy lay within his power ; there is no situation of human fortune or emotion of the human bosom for which he has not the right word ; if he cannot be described as of imagination all compact, it is only because his observation is still more extraordinary. His art is as consummate as his genius, and save when he wrote or planned in haste, impeccable. Infallibility may equally be predicated of the other two supreme poets of the world, Homer and Dante, but the restriction of their spheres forbids any claim to Shakespeare's distinguishing characteristic of universality. The knowledge, and by consequence the sympathy, of their periods was narrow in comparison with his ; he was in contact with a thousand things of which they had no cognisance ; while, since Shakespeare's day, human interests and activities have so greatly multiplied that, unless civilisation should retrograde, the occurrence of another universal poet may well be deemed impossible.

*Shakespeare  
as world-poet*

This overawing vastness of Shakespeare renders it almost impossible to obtain a point of view from which he can be contemplated as a whole. The critic will do best to gradually wind into his subject by a recital of the ordinary, and in Shakespeare's case the obscure, circumstances of ancestry and parentage.

That the apparent etymology of the surname Shakespeare is also the correct one is proved by the existence of an Italian representative, Crollanza, which cannot possibly be a corruption of anything, but must have been bestowed upon the original bearer from some connection between him and the wielding of the spear. A similar cause would originate in England the name Shakespeare, which is of considerable antiquity in the south midland counties. Unfortunately, the earliest record of its occurrence discovered so

*Shakespeare's  
family history*

far is one establishing that the bearer, William "Saxspere" of Clopton in Gloucestershire, a hamlet about seven miles south of Stratford-on-Avon, was hanged in 1248. Another early Shakespeare is recorded as a felon, and another as a perturber of the King's peace. It may have been some association of this description that in 1487 induced an Oxford scholar and incipient Don, not gifted with the faculty of prevision, to change his name of Shakespeare into Saunders, "because it was thought low (*vile*)."<sup>1</sup> Others were less sensitive; the name is found from Penrith in the north to Brixton in the south; and the industry of Mrs. Stopes has unearthed an amazing number of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Shakespeares, principally in War-



Shakespeare's Birthplace before restoration

*From Wheeler's "History of Stratford-on-Avon," 1806*

wickshire. There, in 1557, John Shakespeare, formerly of Snitterfield, and probably son of Richard Shakespeare, yeoman of that village, but himself of Stratford-on-Avon, married at Aston Cantlowe, Mary, daughter of Robert Arden, a farmer, but sprung from a good Warwickshire family. To them in 1564, and as tradition declares, on April 23, the day dedicated to England's patron saint, was born WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE. The entry of baptism is on April 26.

At the time of Shakespeare's birth his father was a prosperous tradesman, who had filled various municipal offices, including that of chamberlain to the borough. In 1565 he was alderman, in 1568 bailiff, and, in the light of things to come, it is most interesting to learn that in that capacity he was the first townsman of Stratford to accord an official welcome to players, the



William Shakespeare.

AFTER THE PORTRAIT BY JOHN TAYLOR, KNOWN AS THE "CHANDOS" PORTRAIT.





companies of the Queen and of the Earl of Worcester. So late as 1575 he appears as buying two houses, but shortly afterwards he is so impoverished as to be unable to contribute fourpence towards the relief of the poor. In 1578 and 1579 he is found alienating his wife's property at Wilmcote and Snitterfield, and in 1586 he is deprived of his alderman's gown for non-attendance, being apparently unable to leave his home for fear of arrest. These circumstances must have made Shakespeare's youth unhappy, notwithstanding the antidotes of a singularly sunny and genial disposition, and of the high spirits natural to his age. The inevitable decline of the family in the estimation of their neighbours must have been especially galling to him ; and it is probable that his sense of slight and wrong reappears in Hamlet's famous soliloquy, where many griefs are enumerated of which the Prince of Denmark could have had no experience, but which were only too familiar to John Shakespeare and his son. Among them is " the law's delay," of which the elder Shakespeare made ample trial in an unsuccessful litigation to recover his wife's property. Fortunately these embarrassments could not prevent Shakespeare from receiving a good education, he being entitled to free tuition at the Stratford grammar school. The character of the education then given at English grammar schools, a point of great importance in connection with the attempts that have been made to represent Shakespeare as an ignorant man, has been ably investigated by the late Professor Spencer Baynes. Mr. Baynes shows that the acquaintance with the technicalities of rhetorical instruction demanded by the allusions in *Love's Labour's Lost* could easily have been acquired by a stay at school of five years, agreeing exceedingly well with the probable age, seven or eight, of Shakespeare's entering the school and that of twelve or thirteen, when he would be old enough to assist his father in his business, and, considering the growing embarrassments of the elder Shakespeare, would almost certainly be withdrawn from school for that purpose. By this time he would have read in the ordinary course Valerius Cato, Æsop, Mantuan, a considerable part of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and something of Cicero, Terence, and Virgil. This would be a fair Latin outfit, and there is no good reason to believe that Shakespeare materially augmented it in after life. In the ordinary course Greek grammar would be commenced in the fifth year, but no Greek author would be read. Mr. Churton Collins has endeavoured with much ingenuity to establish Shakespeare's acquaintance with Greek literature, but when it is considered that he could only have acquired Greek in mature life by solitary study or private instruction, and that Latin translations would be difficult and uninviting, the initial improbability must be held to outweigh the precarious evidence of apparent coincidences which may be otherwise accounted for. It may be added that there was no such Hellenic sentiment in Shakespeare's day as might in our own induce a man to take up the study for himself. The peculiar charm of the language and literature, which have yielded such stores of inspiration to the poets of the nineteenth century, was as yet but feebly discerned. The classical atmosphere was almost entirely Latin. Another important factor

in Shakespeare's education must not be overlooked—the English Bible, which in the Genevan or the Bishops' version would be diligently read in the school. Shylock's speech, "When Jacob grazed his uncle Laban's sheep," shows Shakespeare's intimate acquaintance with Scripture narrative.

*Shakespeare's  
occupations  
in youth*

John Shakespeare was probably a man of many occupations, and among them may well have been that of a butcher. The Stratford tradition preserved by Aubrey that young Shakespeare assisted his father in this business is con-



Shakespeare's Birthplace as restored at the present day

*From a photograph*

firmed by a minute detail. "When he killed a calf," says Aubrey, "he would do it in a high style and make a speech." The lad would not yet be old enough to slaughter an ox, but would be fully up to a calf. If, as Aubrey proceeds to inform us—and there is no reason to discredit a tradition which there could be no motive for inventing—"there was at that time another butcher's son in this town that was held not at all inferior to him for a natural wit, but died young," it follows that Shakespeare himself must have been regarded as a "natural wit" beyond the common. The funeral orations upon the calves, interesting prefigurements of the future discourses composed for Mark Antony, may have served for a time as a vent for the juvenile ferment of a poetical soul, but Shakespeare is not likely to have continued long at the trade of butchering. It is a tribute to the universality of his genius that almost every possible secular occupation has been conjectured for him upon

the strength of what has been deemed the internal testimony of his own writings. The only external testimony worth anything, and its value is not slight, is the tradition that he was for some time an assistant in a school. This would be exactly the profession which a well-educated young man at a loss for a livelihood would be likely to follow; and the truth of the statement is strongly confirmed by the scholastic scenes in *Love's Labour's Lost*, which certainly seem to proceed from one who had not



**Anne Hathaway's Cottage**

*From a photograph*

merely learned but taught the accidence. It further explains the remarkable familiarity with legal technicalities which has led many to believe that Shakespeare must have been a lawyer. A schoolmaster would be very likely to be employed by attorneys in copying documents. A word may be added respecting Shakespeare's handwriting, which has been made an argument against his authorship of the works ascribed to him. All the undoubted autographs of Shakespeare appear on legal documents, and are written in the hand appropriate to business matters. This affords no proof that he could not write the Italian script if he thought fit. Leaving the literary side of the question out of sight, he must, as actor and manager, have continually received letters in the Italian character, and it would be surprising if he could not write what he must have been well able to read. "Methinks we do know the sweet Roman hand."

*Shakespeare's  
marriage*

If Shakespeare at any time taught school it will be a question whether this preceded or followed, or both, one of the most important events of his life, his marriage, about November 1582, with Anne or Agnes Hathaway, daughter, as is most probable, of Richard Hathaway, a yeoman of Shotttery, then lately deceased. The register of the marriage, doubtless celebrated in the neighbourhood, has not been found, but the date is approximatively ascertained by a singular document dated November 28, 1582, and preserved in the registry of the diocese of Worcester, by which two Stratford husbandmen undertake to bear the bishop harmless in the event of any irregularity being found to exist in the marriage then about to be contracted. As it is provided that the banns shall only be asked once, as the consent of the bride's friends is stipulated for while the bridegroom's parents are ignored, and as the birth of a daughter in May 1583 discloses the existence of a pre-nuptial intimacy, the affair had evidently some very unsatisfactory features, not the least of which was that the bride was eight years older than her husband. Shakespeare has given the world the benefit of his experience when he says in *Twelfth Night* :

Let thy love be younger than thyself,  
Or thy affection cannot hold the bent

And in Prospero's impressive warning to Ferdinand :

If thou dost break her virgin knot before  
All sanctimonious ceremonies may  
With full and holy rite be ministered,  
No sweet aspersion shall the heavens let fall  
To make this contract grow.

And again in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, written while his wound was fresh :

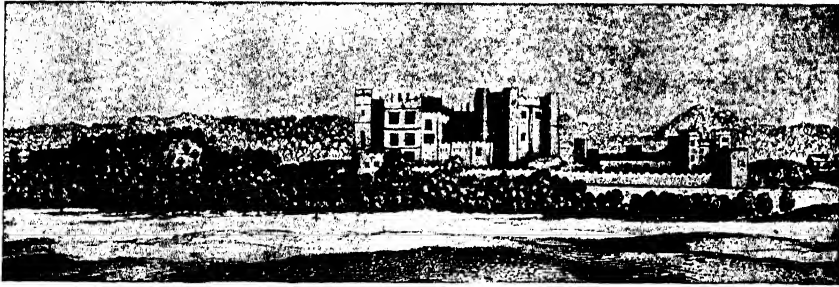
As the most forward bud  
Is eaten by the canker ere it blow,  
Even so by love the fair and tender wit  
Is turned to folly, blasting in the bud,  
Losing his verdure even in the prime,  
And all the fair effects of future hopes

*Shakespeare's  
removal from  
Stratford*

There is no dramatic necessity for any of these speeches, and Shakespeare would hardly have penned them if he had not felt that he had missed domestic happiness by disregard of precepts which he afterwards found to be wise. With Milton, Coleridge, and Shelley he must be enumerated among those who have contracted unhappy marriages out of mere precipitancy. No external proof of incompatibility can be given ; the estranged pair did not part with or without mutual consent, as in the cases of Shelley and Coleridge, nor did Mrs. Shakespeare convert her husband to the lawfulness and expediency of divorce, like Mrs. Milton. They lived together for a time ; twins, a son and a daughter, were born about January 1585 ; but in the course of that year, as most probable, Shakespeare bade adieu to his family and his native place, neither of which, so far as is known, did he see again for eleven years. Family unhappiness may well have conduced to this exodus, as well as pecuniary embarrassment and the misfortunes of Shakespeare's parents. These reasons

would amply suffice without the deer-stealing adventure in Sir Thomas Lucy's park traditionally related of Shakespeare, which, nevertheless, there is no sufficient reason to disbelieve. We have it on the highly respectable authority of Archdeacon Davies in the seventeenth century that Shakespeare "was much given to all unluckiness in stealing venison and rabbits." A scurrilous ballad against the Lucys, attributed to him, is undoubtedly spurious; but the ridicule of the family in *Henry IV.* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is too palpable to be explained away. It is observable, however, that these attacks are not made until after Shakespeare's return to Stratford, as though the cause of resentment was not so much the original prosecution, now twelve years old, as some fresh affront. The Lucys must have been disagreeably surprised to see the banished poacher returning, and by no means in the guise of the proverbial bad shilling, but rather as gold tried in the fire.

We are now upon the threshold of the most important era of Shakespeare's



Kenilworth Castle in the Seventeenth Century

*From a print by Hollar in Dugdale's "Antiquities of Warwickshire," 1656*

life, the period when his genius took its bent and his subsequent career was virtually determined. To our confusion, these momentous years are an absolute blank for the biographer. Except for one mention of his name in a legal document, there is no trace of him from 1585 to 1592. This at least evinces the vanity of denying him the character of an author on the ground of his imputed want of culture, ignorant as we are what influences may have affected him during this blank interval, or what opportunities of culture may have fallen in his way. But his saner and more responsible biographers also appear to us to err in too readily consenting to suppose him all this time a denizen of London, and for most of it practising the player's art or following some employment of even less social repute. It seems to us certain that he must have seen far more of the world and mingled with associates of a much higher class. Nothing is more remarkable in his earliest productions than their perfect polish and urbanity. The principal characters in *Love's Labour's Lost* are princes and nobles, true to the models which he might have found in contemporary society. The young patricians in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* have in every respect the ideas and manners of their class. The creator of such personages must have been in better company and enjoyed a wider outlook upon society than can easily be believed attainable by an actor or a

*Probable  
course of  
Shakespeare's  
life*

resident in a single city. Had this been otherwise, Shakespeare must have winced when he wrote in what, perhaps, was his first play, "Home-keeping youth have ever homely wits": but we feel confident that he had "seen the wonders of the world abroad." Three pieces of evidence may be adduced in favour of this opinion: The implied assertion of his adversary Greene, that he had not even in 1592 followed the theatrical profession very long,<sup>1</sup> since in that year, though doubtless with more direct reference to his authorship than to his acting, he calls him "an upstart crow," the idiomatic ease of the French scenes in *Henry V.*, indicating that he had acquired the language where it was habitually spoken; thirdly, and most important, his familiarity with the moods and aspects of the sea. One passage, in particular, affords, if we do not err, the key to the time and occasion of Shakespeare's foreign travel. It is the passage in the Chorus's speech in the third act of *Henry V.*, describing the departure of a great naval armament:

Suppose that you have seen  
The well-appointed king at Hampton pier  
Embark his royalty; and his brave fleet  
With silken streamers the young Phœbus fanning.  
Play with your fancies, and in them behold  
Upon the hempen tackle ship-boys climbing,  
Hear the shrill whistle which doth order give  
To sounds confused, behold the threaden sails,  
Borne with the invisible and creeping wind,  
Draw the huge bottoms through the furrowed sea,  
Breasting the lofty surge

*Shakespeare  
and Leicester*

It cannot be believed that the author of these lines had not seen what he describes. Many great fleets sailed from England in Elizabeth's reign, but mostly on distant or dangerous expeditions, in which Shakespeare could not have taken part. There was one memorable exception, and this an expedition in which he might well have been thought to have been concerned, apart from any evidence of acquaintance on his part with Courts, or camps, or navies. In December 1585, Leicester sailed from Harwich at the head of a great force, to assume the government of the United Provinces in their war with Spain. The year is that in which Shakespeare disappears from observation, and in which there is every reason to suppose him to have quitted Stratford. Leicester was the great lord of his part of the country, to whose protection he would naturally have recourse, and to whom it would be easy for him to obtain a recommendation. A band of youths from Warwickshire did, we know, follow Leicester, and few Warwickshire youths can have had more cogent reasons for making one of their number than William Shakespeare. It is not necessary to suppose that his entry into Leicester's service followed immediately upon the deer-stealing adventure. He may well have betaken himself to London, where he would be likely to find at least one friend in a Stratford youth of his own age, Richard Field, son of a tanner at Stratford, and then apprentice

<sup>1</sup> The supposed reference to "W S" as "the old player" in *Willobbia's Arise* (1594) has no reference to the theatrical profession, but to the part which the person thus designated had sustained in a love-drama of real life

to the eminent printer Vautrollier, whose daughter he afterwards married, Vautrollier being then an exile in Edinburgh, but still carrying on business in London, his future son-in-law, whose term of apprenticeship had nearly expired, was in a more independent and responsible position than usual with apprentices, and may have been able to give Shakespeare substantial assistance ; and the rather as his master had dedicated books to Philip Sidney, Leicester's nephew and associate in his expedition. Certain it is, at all events, that Shakespeare would have eagerly embraced the opportunity of accompany-



The Parish Church, Stratford-on-Avon

*From a photograph*

ing Leicester's expedition if it had presented itself, and there is good reason to think that it actually may have done so. Leicester took a company of actors with him to the Low Countries, and Shakespeare may have been a member of it, but it is quite as likely that he served in some other capacity. Without question the new scene which would open upon him, the magnificent shows and triumphs with which Leicester was received, the view of tented fields and leaguers, the daily talk of war and statecraft, the association with all sorts and conditions of men, would go far to bestow that knowledge of good society, and create that easy and confident attitude towards mankind which appears in Shakespeare's plays from the first, and which (we must concede this much to the Baconians) are so unlike what might have been

expected from a Stratford rustic or a London actor. The opportunities opened up to such a man by a Continental visit in Leicester's train would be infinite: none can say what adventures he may not have experienced, what personages he may not have encountered, or upon what missions he may not have been employed. Some slight and very possibly fallacious indications of acquaintance with widely separate parts of the Continent are nevertheless too interesting to be omitted. Mr. Stefansson (*Contemporary*



Nicholas Rowe

(The earliest of Shakespeare's editors)

After the portrait by Sir Godfrey Kneller

*Review*, vol. 69) has, in our opinion, proved that Shakespeare, before writing *Hamlet*, had obtained from some source an intimate knowledge of the Castle of Elsinore. The hypothesis of a personal visit is nevertheless unnecessary, for Leicester sent actors to Copenhagen in 1585, among whom were three who subsequently belonged to Shakespeare's own company, and from whom he might easily obtain any information he desired. Although, however, this supersedes the necessity for Shakespeare's visit, it does not demonstrate that it never took place: and nothing would so well fit in with the long voyage which he certainly must have made at some time or other of his life. The other apparent point of contact between Shakespeare and the Continent is the

special knowledge which he seems to possess of Venice. Here, again, there is not sufficient evidence of actual ocular inspection. If, however, Shakespeare ever visited Germany either on a confidential errand or as a member of one of the numerous troops of English actors who at that time ranged the country, it is quite conceivable that the troubled state of France and the Netherlands might compel him to return by way of Venice.

*Shakespeare  
and Bacon*

As already remarked, the existence of a long unknown interval in Shakespeare's life, during which he may have been subjected to influences making for high culture, disposes of the only plausible argument adduced by the advocates of the Baconian authorship of his plays and poems. Even were the case otherwise, it ought to be evident that, whoever the author might



have been, he could not be Bacon. To suppose Shakespeare's dramas, Bacon's philosophy, and Bacon's politics to be the simultaneous operation of a single brain is to credit the human mind with higher powers than it possesses. If Bacon had been the greatest of poets instead of a very middling one, and had, after his disgrace, devoted himself to dramatic literature instead of science, he might conceivably have produced something like Shakespeare's plays; but the idea that such works could proceed *pari passu* with the ponderings of philosophy and the strife of politics shows that the theorist has a very imperfect apprehension of their greatness. It is, moreover, the case that no great lawyer has ever been a great poet. Many great poets have been brought up to the law, but one and all have renounced it as soon as they could, and no eminent lawyer has ever produced a work of high imagination. The productions of Montesquieu and More, which approach most nearly to this character, are, after all, but *jeux d'esprit*. After this it should be superfluous to dwell on the occurrence in the plays of words in the Warwickshire dialect and allusions to Warwickshire local circumstances, or to the unanimous testimony of contemporaries. A word, however, may be devoted to one which we do not remember to have seen brought forward—the impossibility of the Baconian secret being kept. Baconians talk as if Bacon had nothing to do but to write his play at his chambers and send it to his factotum, Shakespeare, at the other end of the town; but nothing can be clearer than that points must have been continually arising requiring consultation with the author, that this author must have lived in a dramatic atmosphere, and been in constant communication with the theatre. That this was really the case is proved by the directions to the players in *Hamlet*. No one, surely, can doubt that the writer of this scene had been in the constant habit of giving instructions to performers. If he were Shakespeare, no question arises; but if he were Bacon? Did he go down to the theatre for the purpose, taking boat or riding over Old London Bridge? or did he drill the players at his chambers? In either case the actors would speedily discover that they were being tutored by the author in person, and the secret would soon be all over the town. There is no escape from this, unless by maintaining that whereas all Hamlet's other speeches are by Bacon, this one is by Shakespeare. Unfortunately, it contains five sentences that have become household words wherever English is spoken.

This particular objection does not apply to the Baconian authorship of the poems and sonnets, which has been maintained with remarkable ingenuity in an anonymous volume by a most accomplished writer—the Rev. Walter Begley. We can only remark that Mr. Begley's case will be much fortified when he is able to produce from Bacon's acknowledged writings lines so instinct with the innermost spirit of poetry as

But that wild music burdens every bough,

or

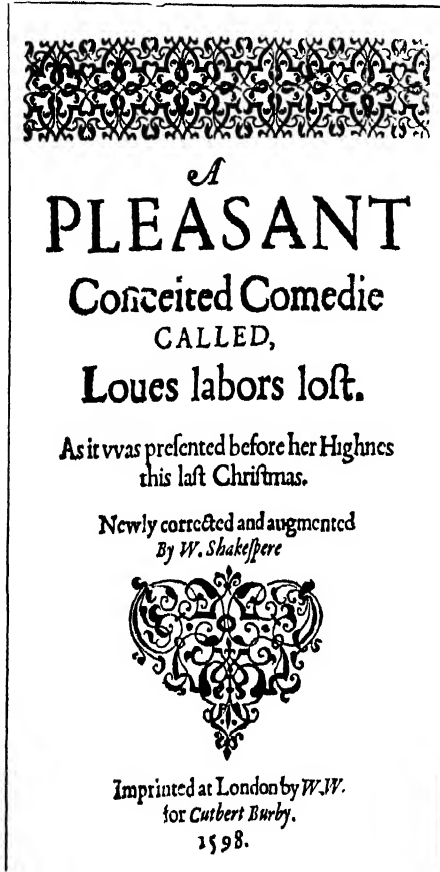
Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.

Bacon might be deemed capable of composing the speeches of Ulysses but these woodnotes wild!

The begin-  
nings of  
Shakespeare

The obscurity which covers Shakespeare's early years during his absence from Stratford is strikingly illustrated by the circumstance that the only affirmation we are able to make respecting them refers not to what he did write, but to what he did not. In his dedication of *Venus and Adonis*

to Southampton he designates this poem as "the first heir of his invention." If this is to be taken in the most obvious sense, it would appear that he wrote nothing before 1589, for the poem is indebted in several passages to Lodge's *Scilla*, published in that year. It consequently follows that none of his plays can have been written before 1590 at the earliest. How long before this time he had been upon the stage it is impossible to say. The earliest authentic document connecting him with it dates from 1594, but we know from Greene's oburgation that he had obtained much credit by 1592, and had, no doubt, for some time been in a position to insure the representation of anything he might write. The crudity of *Titus Andronicus* has occasioned it to be frequently regarded as his first dramatic effort, but it was produced as a new piece in 1594, under which date Shakespeare's possible share in it will be considered. The first of his plays were undoubtedly the three early comedies, *Love's*



Title-page of "Love's Labour's Lost," 1598  
The earliest existing title page bearing Shakespeare's name

*Labour's Lost*, *The Comedy of Errors*, and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, which must have appeared in 1590-1591, or perhaps in the latter year only. The question of priority among them is hard to settle, but we may concur with Mr. Lee in awarding precedence to *Love's Labour's Lost*. All three indicate that the runaway Stratford youth had within five or six years made himself the perfect gentleman, master of the manners and language of the best society of his day, and able to hold his own with any contemporary writer. All belong to the same period of youth, immature but healthy. In *Love's Labour's Lost* youth is evinced by a prevailing extravagance of diction and ostentation of wit and cleverness, though Shakespeare could even then formulate so sane a maxim as

A jest's prosperity lies in the ear  
Of him that hears it;

and the concluding songs are as finished as anything he ever wrote. In *The Comedy of Errors* youth is exhibited in the constant flow of high animal spirits, the play comes nearer to a farce than any of Shakespeare's except *The Taming of the Shrew*. *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* is much quieter, but the atmosphere is entirely that of youth's golden romance. All the leading characters are young people, and all act upon impulse, with no sense of responsibility. "Love is too young to know what conscience is." The plot of *Love's Labour's Lost* has not been traced, and may be Shakespeare's invention. The play contains many references to contemporary events in France, alludes to persons known in London life, and satirises contemporary manners generally. The pedant Holofernes, except in so far as he may be a caricature of some country schoolmaster, appears to be compounded out of two characters in Rabelais, another token of Shakespeare's rapid development as a man of letters. The plot of *The Comedy of Errors* is taken from the *Menæchmi* of Plautus. It might not have been beyond Shakespeare's power to have



The Fortune Playhouse, Golden Lane  
From Wilkinson's "*Londina Illustrata*," 1819

acquainted himself with this not very difficult play in the original, but there seems some internal evidence of his having used a translation. *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* is mainly derived from an episode in the Spanish romance of *Diana*, by Jorge de Montemayor: through the medium, as a slight circumstance indicates, of a French version. Of the three dramas, *Love's Labour's Lost*, "a mine of jest and wit and whim," says Platen, is the wittiest, *The Two Gentlemen* the most poetical, *The Comedy* the most humorous. *Love's Labour's Lost* manifests the most intellectual force, but there is more finish and more contrivance in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, where the versification is more careful and systematic. Shakespeare seldom wrote a sweeter passage than this:

The current that with gentle murmur glides,  
Thou knowest, being stopped, impatiently doth rage;  
But when his fair course is not hindered,  
He makes sweet music with the enamelled stones,  
Giving a gentle kiss to every sedge

He overtaketh in his pilgrimage,  
And so by many winding nooks he strays  
With willing sport, to the wild ocean.

*Love's Labour's Lost* was acted before the Queen at Christmas 1597, and printed in the following year with revisions, as alleged, by the author. The other two plays appeared for the first time in the Folio of 1623.

"*Henry VI.*" These three comedies may be referred with confidence to the years 1590-1591. *Love's Labour's Lost*, at all events, may be supposed to have succeeded well from its revival at Court and from the fact that the title was adapted for another play, *Love's Labour's Won*, mentioned by Meres in 1598,



Edmund Kean as Richard III

but not extant, unless, as is very likely, it is to be regarded as an early draught of *All's Well that Ends Well*, which is not named by Meres, and is probably later than 1598 in its present form. It would probably be produced soon after the appearance of the play whose title it adapted. Shakespeare was at the same time being introduced to a new sphere of dramatic activity, which found him much occupation for some years. In March 1592 a new piece, called *Henry VI.*, was produced at the Rose Theatre, not by Shakespeare's company, with such success that, according to Nash, writing as a contemporary, it was witnessed at different periods by ten thousand spectators altogether. It is, no doubt, the play included in Shakespeare's works as *The First Part of Henry VI.*, in which, however, few certain traces of his hand can be discovered, inso-

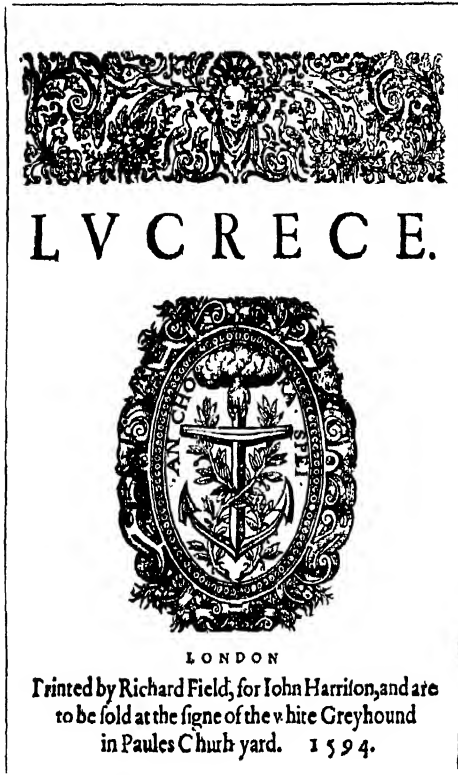
much that he is absolved from the charge, so frequently brought against him, of having slandered Joan of Arc. A Second and a Third Part were performed in the summer, and were printed in 1594 and 1595 respectively under the titles of *The Contention of the Houses of York and Lancaster* and *The True Tragedy of Richard, Duke of York*. These appear in the Folio as the Second and Third Parts of *King Henry VI.*, with revisions and corrections of sufficient extent to show that Shakespeare regarded the original as mainly his work. It is probable that for some reason unknown the authors of the First Part were cashiered, and that Shakespeare was employed to carry on their work in conjunction with coadjutors identified on slight evidence with Peele and Marlowe. That Greene was one of the discarded playwrights is almost proved by an attack upon Shakespeare in a pamphlet published by him shortly before his death in September 1592, invaluable as the first literary notice of Shakespeare we possess, and an involuntary testimony to the position he had attained.

Addressing three dramatic writers of the day, unnamed, but conjectured to be Peele, Lodge, and Marlowe (who, however, can hardly have been one of them if it be true that passages in the pamphlet relating to him were retrenched as unfit for publication), Greene dissuades them from writing for the stage on the ground that the actors have turned dramatists, and manufacture plays for themselves. "Base-minded men, all three of you, if by my misery ye be not warned; for unto none of you like me sought those burrs to cleave; those puppets, I mean, who speak from our mouths, those anticks garnisht in our colours. Is it not strange that I, to whom they have all been beholding; is it not like that you, to whom they have all been beholding, shall (were ye in that case that I am now) by both of them at once forsaken? Yes, trust them not; for there is an upstart crow, beautified in our feathers, that, with his tiger's heart wrapt in a player's hide, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you, and, being an absolute *Johannes fac totum*, is in his own conceit the only Shake-scene in a country. O that I might intreat your rare wits to be employed in more profitable courses, and let those apes imitate your past excellence, and never more acquaint them with your admired inventions." The "tiger's heart wrapt in a player's hide" is a parody of a line in the Third Part of *Henry VI.*, showing clearly where the sore lay. As Shakespeare does not appear to have revised the First Part of *Henry VI.* further than by a few insertions of effective lines, it would seem that Greene, probably one of its authors, had designed to continue it, and felt indignant at his work having been put into the hands of another, especially of one whom he regarded as an interloper transgressing the legitimate limits of his own profession. The character of Shakespeare as a "*Johannes Factotum*" attests his versatility, and the commanding position he was gaining as manager no less than as author. Greene's attack was published by Chettle, who made an apology before the end of the year. "I am as sorry," he says, "as if the original fault had been my fault, because myself have seen his [Shakespeare's] demeanour to be no less civil than he is excellent in the quality he professes, besides divers of worship have reported his uprightness of dealing, which argues his honesty, and his facetious grace in writing that approves his art." As "facetious grace" can only refer to comedy, it should seem that the continuation of *Henry VI.* was not regarded by Chettle as principally Shakespeare's work, and that *Romeo and Juliet* had not yet appeared upon the stage.

The parts of *Henry VI.* belong to an imperfect form of drama peculiar to England, "the chronicle play, in which the annals of a reign or period were thrown into a series of loose and irregular metrical scenes." The creation of the historical tragedy is due not to Shakespeare but to Marlowe, who may have been stimulated by the success of *Henry VI.* to show how such tragedies should be written. His *Edward II.* was entered on the Stationers' Register in July 1593, immediately after his death, and printed in 1594. If acted in his lifetime, it must have been performed before February 1593, when the theatres were closed on account of the Plague.

*Chronicle  
plays and  
tragedies*

It unquestionably had a strong influence upon Shakespeare's *Richard II.*, probably written in 1593 or 1594, while *Richard III.*, without doubt slightly anterior in date, bespeaks the general influence of Marlowe. The vigour of this stirring play, and the great opportunities which it affords to the actor, have made it one of the most generally known of Shakespeare's productions. The higher intellectual quality of *Richard II.*, evinced in the subtle delineation of the character of Richard,



Title-page of "Lucrece," 1594 quarto

by turns gentle and impassioned, impulsive and introspective, but always deeply pathetic, passed almost unobserved until Coleridge brought it to light. In one piece the playwright is predominant, in the other the poet. Shakespeare's character of Richard II is a piece of divination; he has seen deeper than the chroniclers, and given us a different Richard from theirs, but a truer one. In *Richard III* he follows the received account, and makes Richard appear to himself precisely as he appeared to his adversaries. The contrast with his maturer art in *Macbeth* is instructive.

The year 1593 afforded Shakespeare a respite from the cares of management, the London theatres being closed throughout the whole of it on account of the Plague. His company may very

probably have visited the provinces, but even so he would have more leisure than usual. It is characteristic of his mental activity in these days that he should have betaken himself to poetry, for it can hardly be doubted that *Tarquin and Lucrece* was composed between the licensing for publication of his earlier poem, *Venus and Adonis*, in April 1593 and its own licensing in May 1594. Both these poems were dedicated to the Earl of Southampton, a youth of twenty, handsome, accomplished, literary, the patron of many poets of his day, but far above all of Shakespeare. The interesting questions raised by the two dedications, and the style of the poems in general, will be best considered along with the *Sonnets*. Shakespeare would have further poetical occupation if he wrote or rewrote *Romeo and Juliet*, which, from the Nurse's allusion to the interval elapsed since the great earthquake, has been thought

"*Venus and Adonis*" and "*Tarquin and Lucrece*"

to have been begun as early as 1591, but must belong in the main to a more advanced period, while the pervading spirit of youth and the frequency of far-fetched conceits forbid us to place it later than 1593 or 1594, under which latter year we shall consider it.

It is an objection to the belief that Shakespeare embraced the profession of an actor immediately upon leaving Stratford, that in that case the atmosphere of the theatre would have allured his first efforts towards the drama. He tells

us, however, that "the first heir of his invention" was a poem, the date of which may be fixed with some confidence. The indebtedness of *Venus and Adonis* to Lodge's *Glaucus and Scilla* proves that it cannot have been written before the publication of that poem in the autumn of 1589, while the discrepancy of its style and versification from its successor, *The Rape of Lucrece*, compels us to separate it as far as possible. We may therefore assign it to the beginning of 1590, when Shakespeare had as yet written no plays. *Titus Andronicus* might have seemed to invalidate this observation so long as it passed for an early drama, but although pre-Shakespearean in spirit, it was



Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton  
After the portrait by Minervelt

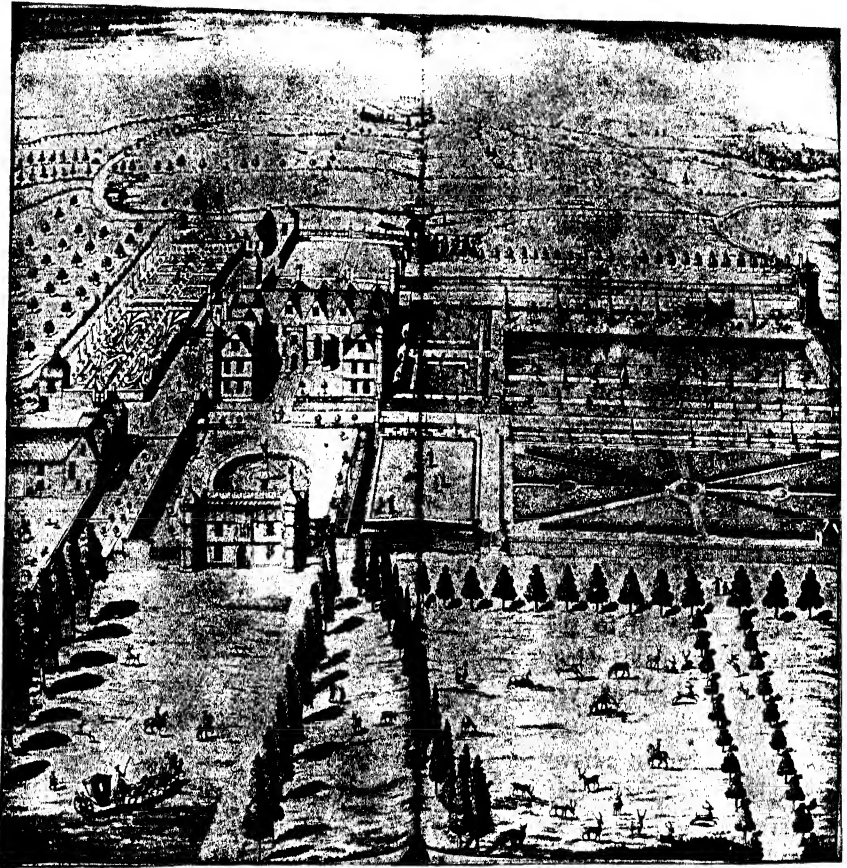
probably founded upon *Titus and Vespasian*, a play produced in April 1592, and was acted as a new play in January 1594, when Shakespeare would have been incapable of work so exaggerated and inartistic. The external evidence for his authorship, nevertheless, is so strong as to constrain the belief that he had enough of a finger in Andronicus's pie when (having, probably, been kept in abeyance by the closing of the theatres) it was served up to the public as "a new piece," to mislead the judicious Meres into attributing it to him. We are even disposed to think that his share may be discriminated. The conclusion of the fifth act contains two lines which occur with little alteration in Shakespeare's acknowledged writings:

Do shameful execution on herself.

But soft, methinks I do digress too much.

*Shakespeare's  
share in  
"Titus  
Andronicus"*

The scene, moreover, though devoid of any unquestionable token of Shakespeare's hand, is throughout noble and dignified, and contains nothing unworthy of him. We suspect, therefore, that the play left unfinished by



Charlecote House and Park in the Eighteenth Century

*From Dugdale's "Antiquities of Warwickshire," 1730*

the original writer, or provided with but a "lame and impotent conclusion," was completed by Shakespeare. This would account for the ascription of the drama to him, and agrees with the tradition of his slight participation in it. One is tempted to fancy it a posthumous and unfinished work of Marlowe's. It is hardly more extravagant than *The Jew of Malta*; the scorn which Aaron pours upon religion is very Marlowe-like, and so is his simile of Tamora :

As when the golden sun salutes the morn,  
And, having gilt the ocean with his beams,  
Gallop the Zodiac in his glistering coach,  
And overlooks the highest peering hill.



Other choice passages would be worthy of Shakespeare himself, but the style differs :

Fresh tears  
Stood on her cheeks, as doth the honey-dew  
Upon a gathered lily almost withered.

My lovely Aaron, wherefore look'st thou sad  
When everything doth make a gleeful boast ?  
The birds chant melody in every bush ;  
The snake lies rollèd in the cheerful sun ;  
The green leaves quiver with the cooling wind,  
And make a chequered shadow on the ground :  
Under their sweet shade, Aaron, let us sit.

King, be thy thoughts imperious, like thy name.  
Is the sun dimmed, that gnats do fly in it ?  
The eagle suffers little birds to sing,  
And is not careful what they mean thereby,  
Knowing that with the shadow of his wing  
He can at pleasure stint their melody :  
Even so may'st thou the giddy men of Rome.

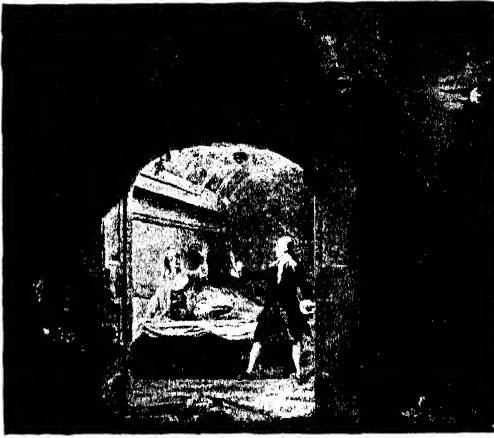
We have seen from Chettle's mention of Shakespeare that *Romeo and Juliet* had probably not been acted up to December 1592, and it could not be brought out in 1593 owing to the closing of the theatres. If, therefore, our view of its date is correct, it would be likely to appear upon the stage soon after *Titus Andronicus*. It is needless to say much of a play which has become a household word in every language, but its epoch-making character in many respects may be briefly pointed out. It is the first play in which we meet a true Shakespearean woman, one of those divine creations in which, without having encountered them elsewhere, we devoutly believe, because their perfection in no way oversteps the modesty of nature. Each has her own sphere, within which she is perfect ; from another point of view it might be otherwise, but this is never allowed. Juliet's especial grace is the reconciliation of girlish innocence with fiery passion, a difficult feat indeed, but perfectly accomplished. No parents ever blamed Juliet for what they would find highly objectionable in their own daughters. This is the first of Shakespeare's long series of triumphs as a creator of female characters. Julia and Silvia have been charming indeed, but of quite another mould. The play also marks Shakespeare's first great success in comic character apart from plot and situation : Mercutio, a pattern of the more refined department of the art ; the Nurse, of the more broadly humorous. If the composition preceded that of *Richard II.*, it also for the first time (if we except Clarence's dream in *Richard III.*) shows his faculty of adorning his dialogue by extraneous poetry. Romeo's description of the Apothecary, and Mercutio's of Queen Mab, might stand by themselves as beautiful poems. The latter may be deemed a precursor of the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, which we shall assume to have been Shakespeare's next play.

The first performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is referred with great probability to December 1594 or January 1595 in virtue of the cumulative

“*Romeo and Juliet*”

“*A Midsummer Night's Dream*”

force of two lines of evidence, neither conclusive by itself. The piece has much appearance of having been composed upon occasion of a marriage, and in both December and January occurred the wedding of a person of rank which may well have been thus celebrated. The very minute description of the phenomena of an ungenial summer has all the air of being derived from a recent instance; and the summer of 1594 had been cold and wet beyond precedent. These arguments would not greatly avail if the date were unlikely on critical grounds, but no period in Shakespeare's life fits so well with the degree of artistic and psychological development requisite for the production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. His power of delineating character and his imagination had still to grow; his fancy had reached its *plus ultra*. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* he for the first time shows his astonishing



David Garrick and Mrs. Bellamy in "Romeo and Juliet"

power of creating unhuman beings whose works and ways are human in their rationality. Dante and Milton have attempted the same, but in making their fiends reasonable they have made them men. Cardinal Newman and Christina Rossetti in our own day have approached much more nearly to Shakespeare, but they can only exhibit their demons and goblins by glimpses, and a certain taint of the supernatural clings to

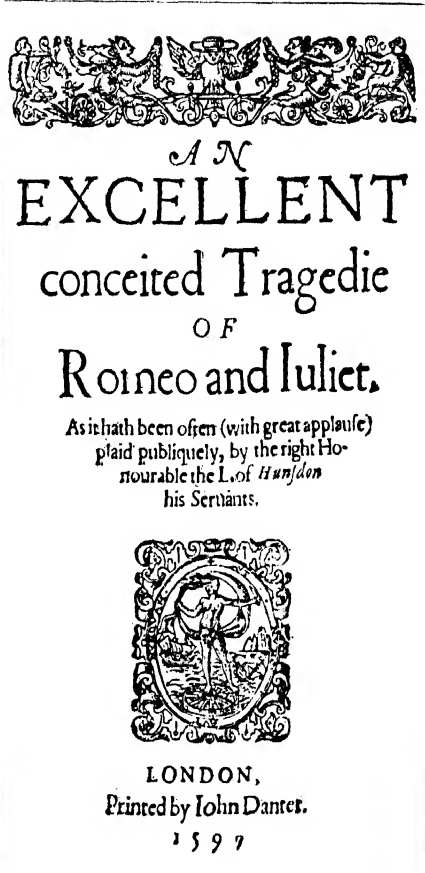
them. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*, and, it may be added, in Goethe's Mephistopheles, there is nothing really supernatural, the exceptional personages are merely beings abnormal from our experience, living under a law of their own. The union in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* of three elements so dissimilar as this fairy world, the humours of Bottom and his fellows, and the dignified refinement of Theseus and his court, renders it almost the most delightful of Shakespeare's plays.

"*King John*" Critics have almost unanimously fixed the date of *King John* at from 1594 to 1596. We feel little doubt that it was produced in the summer of 1595. It is manifestly a celebration of Elizabeth's successful defence of her kingdom against Pope and Spaniard, heightened by contrast with the failure of John, and combined with an earnest appeal to the writer's countrymen for patriotic service in the face of pressing danger. This danger can be nothing but the Spanish invasion, the dread of which kept the whole kingdom astir through the greater part of 1595, when the Spaniards actually did effect a landing in Cornwall, and the scene thus vividly depicted was of daily occurrence:

I saw a smith stand with his hammer, thus  
The whilst his iron did on the anvil cool,  
With open mouth swallowing a tailor's news,  
Who, with his shears and measure in his hand,  
Standing on slippers - which his nimble haste  
Had falsely thrust upon contrary feet—  
Told of a many thousand warlike French  
That were embattailed and ranked in Kent.

Composed in haste to meet an emergency, *King John* misses many occasions for effective dramatic presentation. More might have been made of the character of John. On the other hand, the play gains in spirit and fire. All its strong points are very strong. Constance is the type of the mother whose world revolves solely upon her son, made selfish and aggressive, and eventually driven to frenzy by the pride and passion of maternal love. Faulconbridge is the ideal John Bull. Arthur's situation is surpassed in pathos by no other in Shakespeare, unless Lear's. The haste with which Shakespeare worked is shown by his dependence on the old drama which afforded him his framework, although he borrows none of its diction; and his alterations evince consummate judgment. One, the omission of a farcical scene offensive to the Church of Rome, has, notwithstanding the obvious tendency of his play, been made an argument to prove him a Roman Catholic. If his good taste is not sufficient reason, it is possible to allege another, prosaic but conclusive. Shakespeare was not the man to quarrel either with his friend or his bread and butter, and his friend and patron, Southampton, was a Roman Catholic at that time.

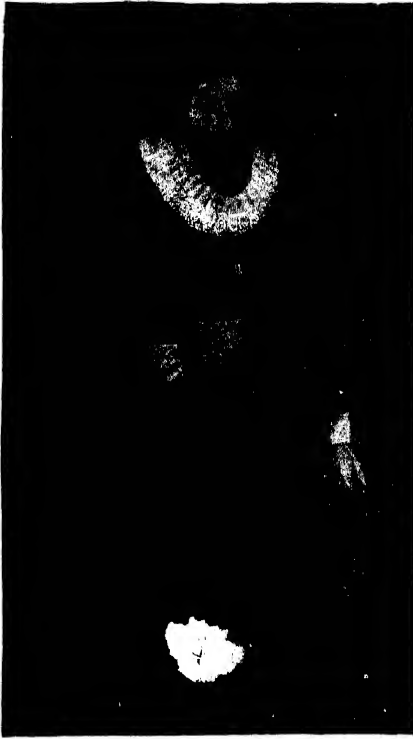
*All's Well that Ends Well* and *The Taming of the Shrew* are usually referred to 1595 as an approximate period, but it appears to us that they must have come later. It is commonly believed, and with good reason, that one or the other must have been a later version of the play termed by Meres in 1598 *Love's Labour's Won*. If this version had appeared before 1598 Meres would



Title-page of "Romeo and Juliet," 1597 quarto

surely have mentioned it by its new title ; if neither is identical with *Love's Labour's Won*, Meres does not mention either. There is much in both plays suggestive of a later date, and traces of an earlier origin are easily explained by the circumstances that *All's Well that Ends Well* is probably a reconstruction of one of Shakespeare's first pieces, and that *The Taming of the Shrew* is founded upon an anonymous play produced in 1594.

"*The Merchant of Venice*"



Edward Alleyn, the Actor  
After the portrait at Dulwich College

The following year, 1596, is the most likely date for *The Merchant of Venice*, unless Mr. Lee's identification of it with the *Venetian Comedy* acted in 1594 (but not by Shakespeare's company) should be established. The first mention of it is by Meres in 1598. It is needless to dwell upon a play so universally known ; nor is it possible sufficiently to praise the enthralling interest of the main action, the art with which the spectator is carried triumphantly over a series of the grossest improbabilities, only remarked in the study, and the deep humanity of Shakespeare's conception of the Jew, too kindred to ourselves ever to forfeit our sympathy, vindictive murderer in intention though he be. Marlowe's Barabas is at hand to show into what a pit a less gifted dramatist and a less genial nature might have fallen

Shakespeare's  
relations with  
his family

ing Shakespeare's private life during this period, except the patronage of Southampton and his summons to act before the Queen in December 1594. The investigations of his biographers have shown that as actor and dramatist he must have enjoyed a considerable income. He cannot, however, have done anything for his father up to at least December 1592, when, in the records of Stratford, John Shakespeare's habitual absence from church, which had led to his being proceeded against as a recusant, is accounted for by his unwillingness to leave home for fear of process for debt. Shakespeare, nevertheless, was so little of a niggard that in 1598 a townsman, Richard Quiney, is found confidently applying to him for a loan of thirty pounds in a sudden strait. It can only be concluded that what seemed an irreparable breach between Shakespeare and his family had been occasioned by the circumstances under which he left Stratford. After 1595,

however, nothing more is heard of the elder Shakespeare's lawsuits and pecuniary troubles, and in October 1596 he is found incurring expense and asserting a higher position than he had previously enjoyed by an application for a coat of arms, which he did not then obtain, but which three years afterwards was discovered to have always belonged to him. This can only have been at the instigation of his son, which implies a thorough reconciliation, and the provision of moneys for urgent occasions. Mr. Lee refers Shakespeare's revisitation of Stratford to

1596, and a most probable motive both for the return and the reconciliation is afforded by the death of his son Hamnet in the August of that year. If so, the story of the Prodigal Son would be reversed, and the little domestic drama between the fortunate but repentant son, the decayed parents to whom he was bringing help and comfort, the faded and long-forsaken wife, and the girls growing up with no know-



**New Place, Stratford-on-Avon, showing the Guild Hall and Chapel and a corner of the Falcon Inn**

*From Wheeler's "History of Stratford-on-Avon," 1806*

ledge of their father, or trained in disesteem for him, would be as pathetic as any scene in his own works. There would be much to forget and forgive on all sides, but Shakespeare's full acceptance of the situation is shown by the important step he took next year in buying New Place, the largest house in Stratford, for which he gave sixty pounds, or between four and five hundred in our present currency, and which must have involved considerable additional expense in furniture and repairs. A tradition, unauthenticated, but intrinsically probable, of Southampton having assisted him to make a purchase on which he had set his heart, may have reference to this transaction. His desire to obtain a good position in his native county is further evinced by a suit, nominally instituted by his father, to regain the alienated property which had belonged to his mother. It led to no result.

The time has now arrived to consider the question of the *Sonnets*, in some respects the most interesting of Shakespeare's writings, as they tell us most about himself. The reader need not be informed that it is one of extreme difficulty, to which justice cannot be rendered in our space. Meres, in 1598, names among Shakespeare's works his "sugared sonnets among his private friends." In 1609, Thomas Thorpe, a bookseller, published the collection as we now have it, with a dedication to "Mr. W. H.," whom he describes as "the only begetter" of the pieces, and to whom he wishes "the immortality promised by our ever-living poet." "Begetter" obviously cannot here mean "author," and until lately has been universally considered to mean

*The "Sonnets"*

"subject." Mr. Sidney Lee, however, has recently contended that it means "procurer," and interprets it of the person by whose instrumentality the *Sonnets* were obtained for publication, whom he plausibly identifies with a certain William Hall. "Begetter" may be used in this sense, but that this is not its signification here is shown by the circumstance that the "begetter" has the poet's, not the publisher's, promise of immortality, no fiction of Thorpe's but made repeatedly in the *Sonnets* themselves. Granted that the appropriation involving the publication, of the MS. of the *Sonnets* was a laudable action, deserving undying fame, how could Shakespeare, writing between 1590 and 1600,



Macklin and Miss Pope as Shylock and Portia  
in "The Merchant of Venice"

foreknow that Mr. William Hall would entitle himself to this renown in 1609? Nothing, to our apprehension, can be clearer than that, since "begetter" cannot denote the writer, it denotes the cause and subject of the poems, the person for whom and upon whom they were written, and but for whom they would not have been written at all; the person to whom Shakespeare made that promise which Thorpe is now about to enable him to redeem. For the identification of "Mr. W. H." we have no other clue than the internal evidence of the *Sonnets* themselves. Five circumstances appear incontestable: that he was a very young man; that he was greatly Shakespeare's superior in rank;<sup>1</sup> that he was a patron of poets, and himself en-

dowed with literary accomplishments; that he was of attractive personal appearance; that his friends greatly desired him to marry. It further appears to us that, with the exception of the group evidently addressed to a woman, all or nearly all were addressed to the same person—a conclusion established, in our opinion, by the prevalent unity of tone, and by the consideration that, had they been inscribed to a number of different persons, no one could have brought them together but Shakespeare himself. In this case they must have been published with his sanction, and he would never have allowed the misdescription of "Mr. W. H." as their "only begetter." Most of the circumstances above named concur in two persons, Henry Wriothesley, Earl of South-

<sup>1</sup> This has been made an objection to the identification of the subject of the *Sonnets* with "Mr. W. H.," it being contended that a person of title would not be addressed as "Mr." Certainly not, if his identity was to be disclosed; but if concealment was desired, such additional disguise would be natural. And if concealment was not intended, why use initials at all?

ampton (born 1573), Shakespeare's especial patron, and William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke (born 1580), "the greatest Maccenas to learned men of any peer of his time." The initials "W. H." would serve equally well for either, for, if Southampton were the man, they might well have been transposed for the sake of disguise. It seems almost impossible to doubt that either



William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke

*After an engraving of the portrait by D. Mylens*

Southampton or Pembroke is indicated when the poet addresses his friend as one who has reason to rejoice at the death of Elizabeth. Both lay under her displeasure : Southampton was in prison, Pembroke banished from Court :

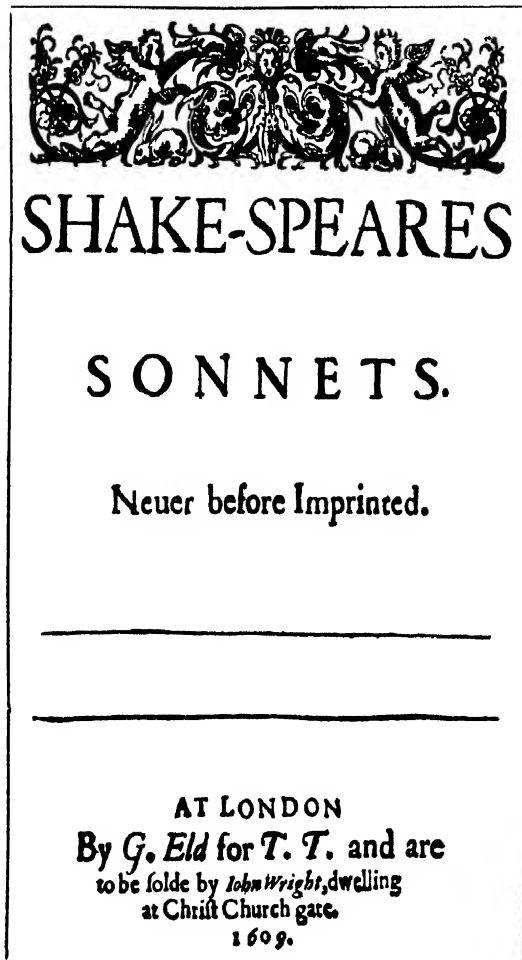
The mortal moon hath her eclipse endured,  
And the sad augurs mock their own presage ;  
Incertainties now crown themselves assured,  
And peace proclaims olives of endless age.  
Now with the drops of this most balmy time  
My love looks fresh, and Death to me subscribes,

Since, spite of him I'll live in this poor rhyme,  
 While he insults o'er dull and speechless tribes.  
 And thou in this shalt find thy monument,  
 When tyrants' crests and tombs of brass are spent.

*Sonnet on the  
 death of Eliza-  
 beth.*

The "mortal moon" is evidently Elizabeth, the Cynthia of the poets

of her day. That the "eclipse" is permanent appears from the reference to her successor in the next quatrain. The presages of the augurs are the doubts and fears of statesmen respecting the unfixed succession, the "incertainties" that so significantly *crown* themselves relate to the accession of James; and the "olives of endless age" are a compliment to his pacific policy, which soon brought about peace with Spain. In Elizabeth's time there had been neither peace nor the prospect of it. It seems marvellous that there should have been any question about what is so absolutely transparent. A slighter circumstance not devoid of weight may be pointed out. Elizabeth died on March 24. The "drops of this most balmy time" indicate that the sonnet was written in April. Southampton was



Title-page of the "Sonnets," 1609

liberated from the Tower on April 10, and Pembroke made haste to return to Court. "James," says Mr. Lee, "came to England in a springtide of rarely rivalled clemency, which was reckoned of the happiest augury." We may therefore feel sure that Shakespeare's sonnet is a felicitation to a friend on the new reign, and no possible person but Southampton or Pembroke has been suggested

*Southampton's  
 claim.*

The sonnet would certainly appear to fit the imprisoned Southampton better than the merely disgraced Pembroke, though it would suit either. There are, nevertheless, serious objections to the identification of Southampton



with the subject of the poems. It is an almost fatal impediment to his claim that there is no record of his having been urged to marry, except at seventeen, which would correspond to 1590, an impossible date for the *Sonnets*. After 1594 there could be no question, at least no question raised by an intimate friend, of his marrying any one but Elizabeth Vernon, with whom he had an amour, and the poet's arguments are not of the kind that could be used to persuade a man to marry his mistress. The entire tone of the *Sonnets*, indeed, is so inconsistent with the probable relations of Shakespeare and Southampton after 1594 that the advocates of the Southampton theory are obliged to assign to them a date too early for their reach of thought and poetical power. Even thus a formidable difficulty arises. There is a remarkable difference between the tone of the dedications of the two poems inscribed by Shakespeare to Southampton. The formality of the dedication of *Venus and Adonis* (1593) is inconsistent with the feeling displayed in the *Sonnets*, with which the warmth of the dedication of *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594) would accord very well. It is therefore maintained that the majority of the *Sonnets* were composed in 1594; but it seems impossible that either so much could be written in so short a time, or so much variety of psychical experience lived through. Shakespeare, moreover, says (Sonnet civ.) that he had first seen his friend three years previously, and implies,



Mrs. Abingdon as Beatrice in "Much Ado About Nothing"

though he does not expressly state, that their attachment had kept pace with their acquaintance. If it had been formed in 1591, the formality of the dedication of 1593 remains unexplained. Sonnet iv., moreover, apparently alludes to a passage in Meres's *Palladis Tamia*, in which case it must be later than September 1598, when Meres's book was registered for publication.

No such difficulties beset Pembroke, whose friends were in August 1597 most desirous to marry him to a grand-daughter of the all-powerful Burleigh, *Pembroke's claim.* It must be supposed that Shakespeare became acquainted with his friend, whoever he was, at the time when marriage was being pressed upon him, for the stream of thought in the *Sonnets*, beginning with half-earnest conceits and gaining volume and intensity as it proceeds, shows the order to be mainly chronological, and the note of marriage is struck in the very first line :

From fairest creatures we desire increase.

As has been stated, this pressure was put upon Pembroke in August, and was, no doubt, continued for some time. Shakespeare appears to say that his acquaintance with his friend commenced at the beginning of winter, for he puts the fall of the leaf first among the natural phenomena which succeeded it :

Three winters cold  
Have from the forests shook three summers' pride ;  
Three beauteous springs to yellow autumn turned  
In process of the seasons have I seen ;  
Three April perfumes in three hot Junes burned  
Since first I saw you fresh, which yet are green.

*Indications  
of dates.*

In Sonnet xcvi. he deplores his absence from his friend in the autumn, and in Sonnet xcvi. another absence in April. If these sonnets were addressed to Southampton in 1594, Southampton must have been absent from town in the spring and autumn, but of this there is no evidence, and it would reduce the time available for the composition of the *Sonnets*, upon this theory too short already. But we have positive proof of the absence of Pembroke at both these seasons—in September 1599, when he was called into the country by the illness of his father, and in April 1601, when he was imprisoned for his transgression with Mistress Fitton; though we do not press this latter circumstance, as Shakespeare himself appears to have been the absentee. One further indication may be given of the *Sonnets* not having been composed earlier than 1597. In Sonnet lxxvi. Shakespeare, among the miseries that make him wish for death, enumerates " Art made tongue-tied by Authority." What art ?



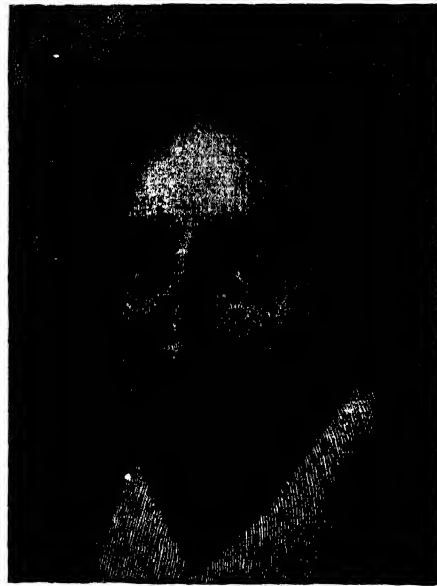
Elliston as Falstaff in Henry IV.

Clearly his own, Poetry, especially dramatic poetry. Painting, Sculpture, and Music are evidently out of the question. In 1597 there had been two interferences of Authority with this art which must have touched Shakespeare very nearly. In August 1597 a brother dramatist, Thomas Nash, was visited with a long imprisonment for political allusions in a play entitled *The Isle of Dogs*, and Henslowe's theatre was closed for a time. In the same year Shakespeare's own *Richard II.* had to be printed without the deposition scene, which must be supposed to have been omitted from the performance also. The special occasion which extorted the complaint in the sonnet may have been the destruction of Marlowe's translation of Ovid's *Amores*, and of Marston's *Pygmalion*, by order of the Archbishop in 1599.

*General  
conclusion.*

We, therefore, conclude that, while the *Sonnets* were certainly addressed for the most part either to Southampton or to Pembroke—and Southampton is not entirely out of the question—the evidence derived from dates and the

general character of the poems greatly preponderates in Pembroke's favour. All will allow their superiority to the narrative poems in intellectual maturity as well as in poetical expression. The lower their date can be reasonably carried the better. We do not doubt that most are posterior to 1597, while probably none can be dated after 1603. It may be added that the general tone of address is more appropriate to a stripling like Herbert, as yet only heir to a peerage, than to Southampton, who, although a youth, had for years been a peer of the realm. It is unlikely that Shakespeare would have termed his patron "fair friend" and "sweet boy." Some difficulties, no doubt, remain. There is no direct proof of any connection between Herbert and Shakespeare, nor does he appear to have been remarkably handsome, as Southampton was. But if the prosperity of a jest lies in the ear that hears it, so may that of a countenance in the eye that beholds it. The "dark lady" group of sonnets (CXXVII-CLII). relates to some critical circumstance in Shakespeare's life, of which we know no more than that it must have occurred before 1599, when two of them were printed. We do not think that the man referred to in them is the same person as the subject of the other sonnets; if he were, this would be an argument for Pembroke, as his christian-name was evidently William. Sonnet cXLv., which is not a sonnet, is entirely out of place.



Richard Burbage

*After the portrait at Dulwich, attributed to himself*

We have left ourselves no space to comment upon the poetical merit of the *Sonnets*, nor is it needful. While some, no doubt, are mere exercises of ingenuity, many more in depth of emotion and splendour of imagery surpass any kindred compositions in the language. That there should have been a time when they were slighted and contemned seems now like a bad dream. This was the eighteenth century, but in Shakespeare's own age they were far from enjoying the esteem accorded to his narrative poems, which ran through edition after edition, and in the eyes of most, eclipsed even his plays. It is as the epical, not the dramatic poet that he is celebrated upon his monument. To our age these poems appear very admirable as galleries of glowing pictures, and not devoid of striking thoughts, but tedious from over-elaboration, and strangely deficient in pathos, the moving nature of the themes considered. This is probably owing to the deliberate matter-of-fact way in which the poet goes about his task, upon which Coleridge, Hazlitt, and Dowden

*Shakespeare's  
epical poems*

have commented. The *Sonnets*, so long neglected, have in our own day called forth more criticism and speculation than any other of Shakespeare's works, except *Hamlet*. The comments of Professor Dowden, Mr. George Wyndham, and Mr. Thomas Tyler are most valuable, though we cannot subscribe to the last-named writer's views on the minor detail of Mistress Fitton.

"*Henry IV.*" The purchase of New Place, the outward and visible sign of Shakespeare's victory over the world, aptly ushers in the most sunny and genial, though not the most marvellous epoch of his dramatic production. The *First Part of Henry IV.*, licensed for the press in February 1598, must have been written and acted in 1597. The Second Part and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, satellite of the historical dramas, cannot have been long delayed. There are perhaps none



Mrs. Woffington as Mrs. Ford in "*The Merry Wives of Windsor*"

of his productions in which Shakespeare is so thoroughly at home, and from which so lively an impression may be derived; not, indeed, of the man in his profounder moods, but of the man as he appeared to his fellows. If critics are right, as no doubt they are, in recognising in *Hamlet* and *Troilus* the influence of a period of gloom and sadness, the creation of Falstaff must denote one of genial jollity, such as might well be induced by the victory in the battle of life signalised by his installation in his native town. In full keeping with this feeling is the fact that the second part contains many local allusions, including a reference to a peculiar agricultural custom in the Cotswolds, alone sufficient to prove that the play was written by one acquainted with the locality. The serious portion of the plot is but moderately inter-

esting, but it is handled with an easy power which would excite still more admiration if it were not so completely overtopped by the humour of Falstaff. There seems no doubt that Falstaff was originally called Oldcastle, from which it has been absurdly argued that Shakespeare intended to attack the Reformation. If he had had any such design he would have made Falstaff a Puritan.

"*Henry V.*" *Henry V.* is in some respects a more extraordinary production than *Henry IV.*, for it shows what Shakespeare could make of a subject so undramatic that it might well have been deemed intractable. The date and purpose of the play are proclaimed by itself in the speech of the Chorus celebrating Essex's expedition to Ireland in the early part of 1599. It must be regarded, like *King John*, as a dramatic improvisation designed to animate and guide public feeling. *King John* has a highly dramatic subject, *Henry V.* is better adapted for epic. Its tone, therefore, is lofty and epical, befitting the grandeur of the momentous, if undramatic, action, and it is sown

with passages of majestic eloquence and brilliant poetry, while the comic personages, our old acquaintances, retain their original humour. The dissolute Prince Hal has become the ideal of a warrior king, and, designedly or undesignedly, affords no inapt symbol of Shakespeare's own transformation from the youth "given to all unluckiness" into the first burghess of his native place and the first author of his age.

Shortly after the broad humour of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Shakespeare passes to a totally different type of comedy, the poetical and romantic. Perhaps no department of his work was so absolutely congenial to him, for none so entirely reconciled the graver and the lighter qualities of his mind. In beginning his career as a dramatist, he had turned to it as it were by instinct, for one of his earliest works, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, is an example of it, and one of extraordinary merit considering his age. He now, in the prime of his strength, produces three masterpieces, *Much Ado about Nothing*

Poetical and  
Romantic  
Comedy



Richard Tarleton, a comedy actor of Elizabeth's time

*From an old print*

(1598 or 1599), *As You Like It* (1599 or 1600), and *Twelfth Night* (1600). Of these, *Much Ado about Nothing* is the least delightful, shadowed by the villainy of Don John and the unchivalrous behaviour of Claudio; but Benedick, Beatrice, and Dogberry make amends. *As You Like It* is the most thoroughly delightful play that Shakespeare ever wrote, and Rosalind perhaps deserves the palm among all his female creations. The Forest of Arden is as purely an ideal world as that of the *Midsummer Night's Dream* or *The Tempest*, and owes nothing of its ideality to the supernatural. It is perhaps the most remarkable instance that poetry affords of an ideal creation out of purely human elements. If *Twelfth Night* is less enchanting, it is merely because the Illyrian city cannot have the romantic charm of the forest, nor can Viola reproduce the unique flavour of Rosalind, nor can she have a foil

in Celia. But if less exceptional, the character is not less exquisite, and touches the feelings more deeply; the subordinate personages are even more humorous; and the action is balanced with the nicest skill on the limits between gay and grave. It is remarkable that among the materials for his plot Shakespeare takes up the Spanish romance from which he had derived *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and uses the part which he had then rejected.

*Shakespeare  
at the close of  
the century*

The cheerful character of Shakespeare's dramatic work towards the close of the century was promoted not merely by his restitution to Stratford, but by the general prosperity of his affairs. In 1599 the brothers Burbage built the Globe Theatre in Bankside, and allotted shares in the receipts to some of the more distinguished performers, among whom Shakespeare is mentioned. The amount he would probably receive, including his salary as actor, has been estimated at £500 in the money of the period, out of which he would have to contribute his share towards the expenses of the theatre. Remuneration for his dramatic writings and extra emoluments from performances at Court and at private mansions would increase his income, which may be fairly estimated at £600 a year. His was one of the natures with which prosperity agrees, and we may see thankfulness and satisfaction reflected in his work. This complacency, nevertheless, was mainly the creation of outward circumstances. It was not yet based upon philosophy allied to experience, and resulting in that large, liberal, tolerant view of life of which his latest writings show him in possession. Ere this could be his, he had yet, to all appearance, to traverse a tempestuous inward crisis. Meanwhile the century, for him, closed in peace.

## CHAPTER VI

### SHAKESPEARE—(continued)

IF the sixteenth century had closed brightly for Shakespeare, the seventeenth began in cloud and storm. His own position may not have been affected, but he must have suffered deeply with his patron and his friend. We have seen him celebrating Essex's Irish expedition in *Henry V.*, and promising that the hero should return, "bearing rebellion broached upon his sword." Things had turned out far otherwise. Falling from one disaster to another, Essex, in February 1601, was goaded into the mad attempt at revolution which brought him to the scaffold, and his ally Southampton, Shakespeare's friend and Mæcenas, to the Tower. In the same month, Pembroke, the subject, as we have contended, of Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, incurred, like Raleigh before him, the Queen's displeasure by an intrigue with a maid of honour. He was imprisoned and banished the Court. It has already been remarked that the month of his imprisonment corresponds with the month of April during which Shakespeare laments his severance from his friend. We are nevertheless not disposed to connect the circumstances, as Shakespeare seems to write as one who has himself been absent in the country. The date of the absence may with probability be conjectured from the first four lines of Sonnet xcvi. :

*Shakespeare  
at beginning  
of seventeenth  
century*

From you have I been absent in the spring,  
When proud-pied April, dressed in all his trim,  
Hath put a spirit of youth in every thing,  
That heavy Saturn laughed and leaped with him.

Saturn may be merely a poetical synonym for Time; but if, as is more probable, the planet Saturn is denoted, he certainly is not introduced at random. Mr. George Wyndham has most ingeniously surmised a reference to the peculiar brilliancy of Saturn when in opposition to the sun, and thus at his greatest possible distance. The sun in April is in Aries and Taurus, and to be in opposition to him Saturn must be in Libra or Scorpio, as actually was the case at the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century. This acute observation may be reinforced by another derived from the kindred study of astrology. Libra is astrologically the *exaltation* of Saturn, one of the signs in which he is supposed to be most potent. He may therefore with great propriety be said to "laugh and leap" in it. He was in Libra and opposed to the sun in the April of 1599 and 1600. The latter date would agree best with the general chronological scheme of the *Sonnets*.

"Julius  
Caesar"

It is an interesting speculation whether the conspiracy of Essex contributed to direct Shakespeare's attention to the conspiracy of Brutus as the subject of his next play. There can be little doubt that *Julius Caesar* appeared in 1601, for it is alluded to in Weever's *Mirror of Martyrs*, published in that year, and it seems out of keeping with the plays of 1599-1600. Professor



The Globe Theatre at Southwark

*From a drawing in the British Museum*

Dowden has pointed out its intellectual affinity to *Hamlet*, a drama of the succeeding year. In resorting to Plutarch for a subject, Shakespeare was merely repeating the procedure with the English chroniclers which had answered so well in his English historical plays, but he had now to deal with material already sifted by a masterly hand. It was not the especial business of the English chroniclers to record noble actions: they relate the history of the times with fidelity, and take things noble or ignoble as they come.



But Plutarch's *Lives* are eclectic; his aim is to preserve what is really memorable in a strictly human point of view, and in so doing he gives it so admirable a form that Shakespeare himself cannot improve upon it. Many, therefore, of the most striking traits and sayings in *Julius Cæsar* are taken directly from his biographies of Cæsar and Brutus. Referring back from the poet to the biographer, we find continually how what has most impressed and charmed us belongs to Plutarch. An inferior writer would have attempted to heighten or refine upon his original. Shakespeare never alters what he knows cannot be improved. Where, however, he sees his opportunity, he fairly carries Plutarch away in his talons. The finest scenes in the play, scenes which Shakespeare himself never surpassed—the oratory and tumult at the funeral of Cæsar and the dispute between Brutus and Cassius—are developed from the merest hints. With exquisite judgment, these grand displays of eloquence and passion are reserved for the part of the play that requires them. The first half, full of incident and character, needs no embellishment; but after Cæsar's death the interest would flag but for these potent reinforcements. In another respect Shakespeare is very dependent upon Plutarch—the delineation of character. He has not to do here with rude faint outlines, like the traditional Macbeth or the traditional Lear, but with portraits painted after authentic history by the hand of a master. These

THE  
Tragicall Historie of  
HAMLET  
*Prince of Denmarke*

By William Shake-speare.

As it hath beene diuerſe times acted by his Highneſſe ſer-  
uants in the Cittie of London : as alſo in the two V-  
niuerſities of Cambridge and Oxford, and elſe-where



At London printed for N.L. and Iohn Trundell.  
1603.

Title-page of the First Quarto of "Hamlet"

*From the only extant copy, in the library of the Duke of Devon-  
shire at Chatsworth. (Reproduced from Mr. Sidney  
Lee's "Life of Shakespeare" by permission of  
Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co.)*

he follows religiously. It hence comes to pass that in the character of Brutus he has made a nearer approach than anywhere else to drawing a perfect man, for Plutarch will have it so "In all Brutus's life," says Plutarch, after recording one undeniable blot, "there is but this one fault to be found," and Shakespeare's Brutus is equally perfect ethically, save for his requiring Cassius's prompting to do what he should have resolved upon by himself. Professor Dowden justly points out the analogy with Hamlet. The very perfection of Brutus's moral nature renders him inefficient intellectually, he cannot condescend to the sphere of an unscrupulous man of the world like Antony, and Antony beats him from the field. This, of course, is also in Plutarch, but Plutarch does not show, as Shakespeare does, the necessary connection of Brutus's moral nobility with his intellectual failings. The other personages are depicted as in Plutarch, but with much greater vividness. The subordination of Cæsar's part has been censured, but appears inevitable. Had Cæsar been a more prominent character he must have been represented in personal relation to Brutus, inimical or benevolent. If the former, suspicion must have been cast upon the disinterestedness of Brutus's patriotism; if the latter, he would have been open to the charge of ingratitude.

*Shakespeare  
and Plutarch*

There is an interesting indication that Shakespeare read other lives of Plutarch than those he dramatised, and even before he had written *Julius Cæsar*. Cæsar says to Antony, wishing to elicit his opinion of Cassius

Come on my right hand, for this ear is deaf,  
And tell me truly what thou think'st of him

Cæsar is nowhere represented as deaf, but the idea seems borrowed from Plutarch's statement, in his life of Alexander the Great, that Alexander "always used to lay his hand upon one of his ears to keep that clean from the matter of accusation."

On the whole, save for defects inherent in the subject, *Julius Cæsar* is perhaps as perfect a work as the dramatist's art is capable of producing. That perfection and power are not convertible terms appears from the undeniable fact that Shakespeare's next production, though imperfect in structure and full of puzzling riddles, has affected mankind far more deeply and exhibits qualities far more exceptional. This play is *Hamlet*.

The stage history of *Hamlet* is remarkable. It is entered on the Stationers' Register in 1602 as a piece lately acted. In 1603 a quarto edition appeared containing not more than about three-fifths of the play as republished in the following year. In the earlier edition Polonius is called Corambis, and there are many discrepancies in language and in the arrangement of scenes and speeches. It is a highly interesting question whether the first edition was printed after an imperfect or an acting copy, or possibly taken down in shorthand during the performance, or whether Shakespeare himself revised and enlarged his drama. The former seems the more probable supposition; although even the second edition, described as "printed from the only true

and perfect copy," wants several passages found in the folio of 1623, though this again has various signs showing that it was abridged for the stage. These may have been retrenched owing to the length of the play, or may have been

subsequent additions. We feel that *Hamlet* expresses more of Shakespeare's inner mind than any other of his works, and is the most likely of any to have been subjected to close revision. One trifling circumstance indicates revision, the alteration of twelve years, given in the First Quarto as the period for which Yorick's skull had been interred, to twenty-three upon Shakespeare's remarking that he had made Hamlet a man of thirty.

Another interesting question is the relation of Shakespeare's drama to an older play. From an allusion of Thomas Nash we learn the existence in 1589 of a play on the subject of *Hamlet*, in which a ghost appeared crying "Revenge!"

The theme may well have been suggested by the English actors lately returned from Copenhagen, and, perhaps, were the play now extant, the origin of Shakespeare's remarkable acquaintance with the topography of Elsinore might be ascertained. It has been attributed with much probability to Thomas Kyd. It was acted again in 1594, and must have been well known to Shakespeare, who, no doubt, took from it the idea of Hamlet



# The Tragicall Historie of HAMLET Prince of Denmarke.

*Enter two Centinels. { now called Bernardo  
& Francisco —*

1. **S**Tand: who is that?  
2. **S**Tis I.

1. O you come most carefully vpon your watch,  
2. And if you meete *Marcellus* and *Horatio*,  
The partners of my watch, bid them make haste.  
1. I will: See who goes there.

*Enter Horatio and Marcellus.*

*Hor.* Friends to this ground.

*Mar.* And leegemen to the Dane,  
O farewell honest souldier, who hath releued you?  
1. *Bernardo* hath my place, giue you good night.

*Mar.* Holla, *Bernardo*.

2. Say, is *Horatio* there?

*Hor.* A peece of him.

2. Welcome *Horatio*, welcome good *Marcellus*.

*Mar.* What hath this thing appear'd againe to night?

2. I haue scene nothing.

*Mar.* *Horatio* sayes tis but ourfantasic,  
And wil not let beliefe take hold of him,  
Touching this dreaded fight twice scene by vs,

B

There-

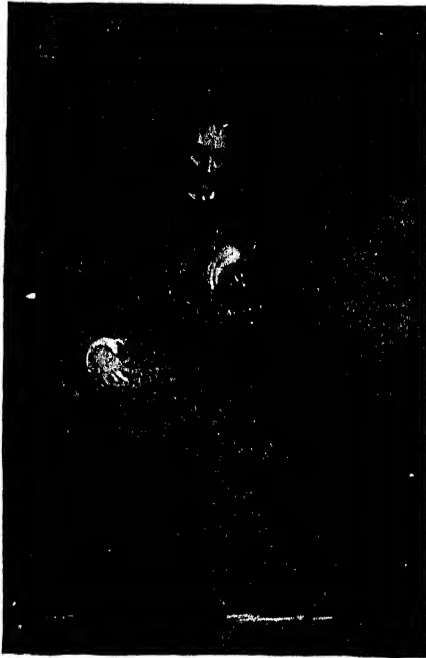
The opening page of the First Quarto of "Hamlet"

From the copy (wanting the title-page) in the British Museum

*The old play  
of "Hamlet"*

as a dramatic subject. It would be of service to him by bringing together the Hamlet legend as related by Saxo Grammaticus and the version of it in the novel of Belleforest. Apart from this, we cannot believe that he adapted it, or that any considerable trace of it would be found in his work. It may even be that he has unkindly burlesqued his predecessor in the Player's bombastic speech about "the rugged Pyrrhus": but Hamlet's apology for the lukewarmness of Polonius's appreciation suggests that Marlowe, the declared adversary of "jigging veins," was the butt of the parody.

*Exception /  
character of  
"Hamlet"*



Fechter as Hamlet

*Hamlet* is Shakespeare's most wonderful play, and the most famous, but, regarded as a drama, it is not the best. The action is loose and inartistic, there is no logical sequence in the incidents; the moral might almost seem to be that life is a chance medley, and that the high resolve of the avenger and the sagacious plotting of the usurper are alike at the mercy of trivial accidents. Given the situation and the character of an Othello or a Macbeth, we foresee the issue, but no reader or spectator of *Hamlet* for the first time could tell whether Hamlet's vengeance was to be accomplished or not. It seems as though Shakespeare, having written so much for Art's sake, determined at last to write something for his own, and made *Hamlet*, as Goethe made *Wilhelm Meister*,

a vessel into which he could put his views and observations of men and things. It is noteworthy that it is much the longest of his plays; that in no other, unless *The Tempest* be an exception, does a single character so completely dominate the action; and that nowhere is such an amount of speaking imposed upon a leading personage. These are, no doubt, among the chief sources of its popularity, to which may be added the wonderful perfection of individual scenes considered by themselves; the truth and depth of the characters, not one of which but has some strong and original trait; above all, the sense of mystery, vagueness, and the gazing, as it were, upon a vast and remote horizon. In fact, *Hamlet* is more nearly akin to *Faust* than to Shakespeare's other tragedies, and the main idea, so well pointed out by Goethe, of a noble and tender spirit sinking beneath the load of a duty which it cannot perform, is almost buried in the multitude of minor issues. The question of Hamlet's madness has been much debated. We feel no doubt

that it is real, though never amounting to lunacy, and that the actual taint of insanity in his mind makes the simulation of it much the easier to him. It is one of the finest points of dramatic irony in the play that the deception, as he deems it, by aid of which he desires to compass his revenge, is turned against himself when his uncle, with perfect justification, as must have seemed to all, makes it the ostensible reason for banishing him. There is much of the cunning of the madman in his trick upon Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, which a sane man would not have carried to such length, as it would have sufficed to destroy the letter.

The unsatisfactory nature of human life is by no means an established article of Shakespeare's creed. For some years after the performance of *Hamlet* we find him composing under the influence of more serious feeling than of old, producing tragedy by preference, but if comedy, comedy devoid of the brightness and lightness of heart that has characterised his comedy until now. But in only one piece after *Hamlet* is the view presented of human life as a whole thoroughly pessimistic. Tragic incidents are selected for treatment, but human nature and human society are never, save

once, represented as rotten at the core. This one exception is the play which there is good reason to believe next followed *Hamlet*, *Troilus and Cressida*. Some circumstance must certainly have been at work to derange the inner harmony of Shakespeare's being, and as the heroine of his new play is the byword for female inconstancy, the presumption is very strong that this was connected with the passion of love. It would be natural to interpret it by the history of the Dark Lady adumbrated in the second

THE  
Tragicall Historie of  
HAMLET,  
*Prince of Denmarke.*

By William Shakespeare.

Newly imprinted and enlarged to almost as much  
again as it was, according to the true and perfect  
Copie.

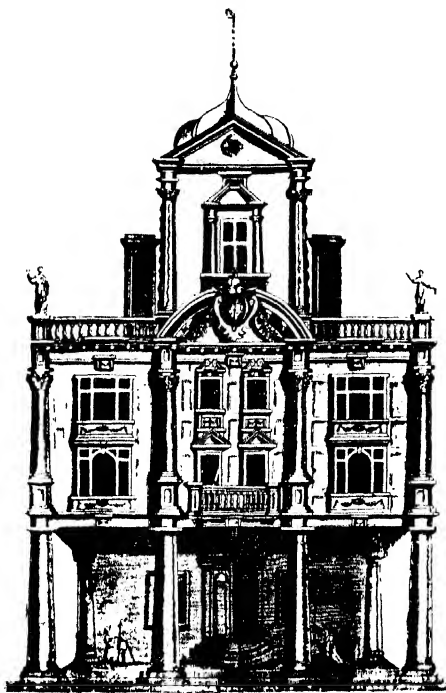


AT LONDON,  
Printed by I. R. for N. L. and are to be sold at his  
shoppe vnder Saint Dunstons Church in  
Fleetstreet. 1605.

Title page of the 1605 "Hamlet"

"Troilus  
& Cressida"

series of the *Sonnets*: but this is out of the question, for two of them had been published in Jaggard's *Passionate Pilgrim* as early as 1599. If connected with any episode in the *Sonnets*, it is most probably with the incidents, whatever they may have been, which led him in Sonnet cxix. to speak of his love as "ruined," even if "built anew." As these sonnets evidently belong to the latest group of those addressed to his friend, 1602 would be a very probable date, and there is strong reason to believe that this was the year in which *Troilus and Cressida* was written. The literary history of the



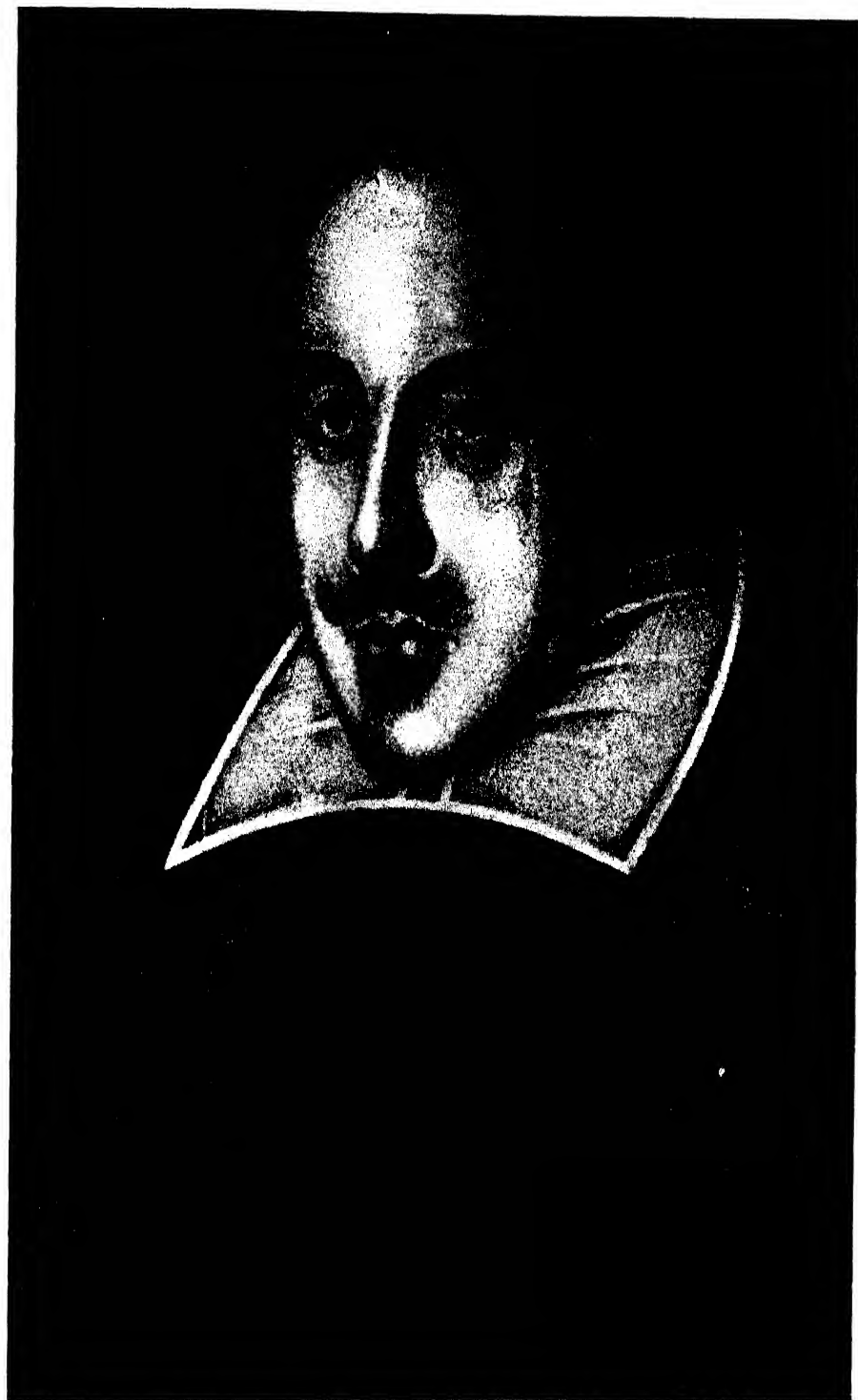
The Duke's Theatre, Dorset Gardens

From Wilkinson's "Londinia Illustrata," 1819

play, however, is as perplexing as the play itself. In 1599 Dekker and Chettle wrote a drama on the subject, with which a contemporary satirist seems to have imagined that Shakespeare had some concern. In February 1603 a piratical publisher obtains a licence to print "the book of *Troilus and Cressida* as it is acted by my Lord Chamberlain's men," Shakespeare's company. When, however, the play is at length printed by another publisher about February 1609, it is stated never to have been performed, while other copies of the same edition declare it to have been acted at the Globe. The simplest way of reconciling these conflicting statements is to suppose that the play had not, in fact, been acted when the publication was first licensed, but that the licensee, knowing that it was in preparation, took the liberty to anticipate ; that some cause, possibly the death of Elizabeth, prevented its production ; that the statement made early in 1609 that it had never been represented was true at the time, but had to be retracted when the play was actually brought out. In any case, the evidence of diction and versification speaks for 1602-3.

In *Troilus and Cressida*, even more than in *Hamlet*, Shakespeare has set himself to exhibit "the seamy side of things." In *Hamlet* the repulsiveness is almost cancelled by the splendour of the poetry, the depth of the problems suggested, and the surpassing interest of the principal character. In *Troilus and Cressida* there is nothing of this. Shakespeare disdains the magnificent materials which lay to his hand, and seems to take pleasure in degrading his theme, in compelling us to view the amorous idyll of the Trojan pair with the eyes of Pandarus, and the Grecian heroes with the eyes of

*Satirical  
character of  
"Troilus and  
Cressida"*



Copy from Original Portrait of Shakespeare in Oils, 1609.

ACCEPTED AS THE PORTRAIT ENGRAVED BY DROESHOUT FOR THE 1623 FOLIO.





Thersites. Cressida, of whom he could have made so much in happier mood, is simply a light woman, inconstant, sensual, frivolous. Taken in connection with the generally melancholy character of his poetical work at this time of his life, this may well be deemed the expression of a sick and sore heart, scornful of some English Cressida unknown to us, more scornful still of himself as a dupe,

Shamed through all his nature to have loved so slight a thing,

and summing up his view of the sex in general in Diomedes's withering denunciation of Helen :

*Paris.* Who, in your thoughts, merits fair Helen best,  
Myself or Menelaus ?

*Diomedes.* Both alike :  
He merits well to have her, that doth seek her,  
Not making any scruple of her soileure,  
With such a hell of pain and world of charge ;  
And you as well to keep her, that defend her,  
Not palating the taste of her dishonour.

Having thus delivered himself, Diomedes goes away, and

Neither looks upon the heaven nor earth,  
But gives all gaze and bent of amorous view  
On the fair Cressid.

A supreme piece of dramatic irony. Viewed as a satire, *Troilus and Cressida* is one of the most interesting of Shakespeare's works ; as a play it is straggling and ineffective. Its beauties are for the closet, not for the stage. It is full of insight into human nature and civil and political wisdom, especially in the marvellous speeches of Ulysses. That beginning “Troy, yet upon her basis, had been own” bears a striking resemblance to the sublime passage on Natural Law quoted in our account of Hooker. Yet the general impression is confused and enigmatical. Shakespeare might have applied to himself the lines which he puts into the mouth of Achilles :

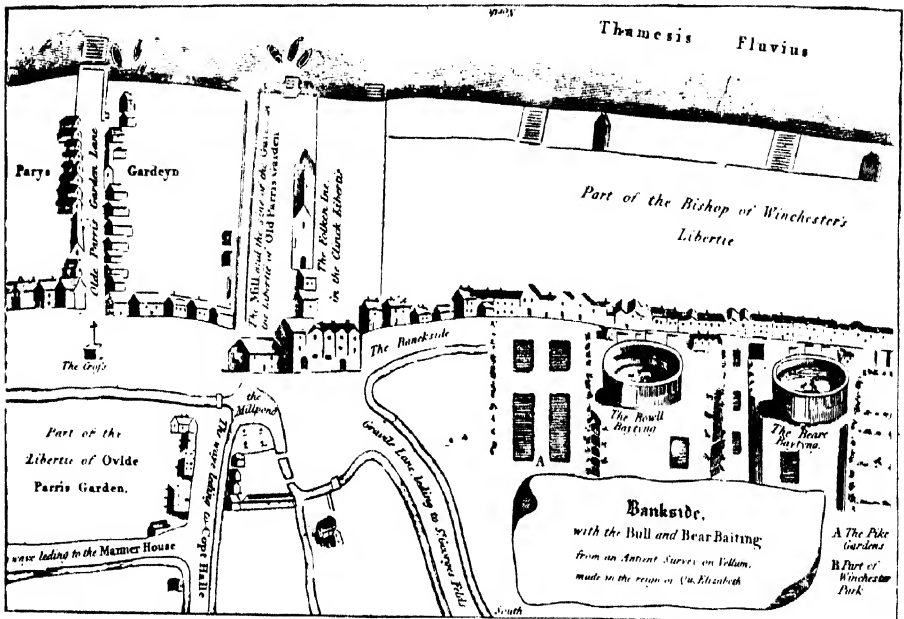
My mind is troubled, like a fountain stirred ;  
And I myself see not the bottom of it.

There is no reason to connect *Troilus and Cressida* with any literary feud, or with any intention of parodying the *Iliad*. Shakespeare ignores Homer, and follows the mediæval romances. Rossetti's magnificent picture of Cassandra is taken from Act V. Scene 3, and he has even improved upon the original by introducing Paris and Helen. The Prologue, Epilogue, and last speech of Pandarus are probably spurious.

If Shakespeare's mind was at this time shrouded in gloom, his external fortunes went on brightening. The accession of James in March 1603 gave him a more munificent patron than Elizabeth, and restored his disgraced friends to liberty and honour. Southampton was released, Pembroke welcomed back to Court ; both were gratified with distinctions and employments. The absence of any funeral tribute to Elizabeth from Shakespeare's pen is thus susceptible of easy explanation. Elizabeth had not been an

*Shakespeare*  
a *James I*

unkind mistress to him; Ben Jonson tells us that she admired his works, and the tradition that *The Merry Wives of Windsor* was written at her command, true or false, implies as much. But there is no trace of any confidential relation between them, or of his pen having been ever employed by her for any political purpose. It was otherwise with the new sovereign. We shall find evidence of Shakespeare's pen being exerted four times in James's interest. There is some slight reason for thinking that his company may have visited Scotland before James's accession, when he could not have failed to gain the King's acquaintance and favour. However this may be, Shakespeare's especial connection with Southampton must have made him an adherent of Essex, whom James regarded as the steadiest advocate of his accession to



Plan of the Bankside, Southwark, in Shakespeare's time, showing the Bull- and Bear-baiting Gardens, the Falcon Inn, &c.

*From an old plan in the British Museum*

the English throne. Honours fell thick and fast on the Essex party, and the players were not forgotten. On May 19, 1603, Shakespeare's company, heretofore described as "the Lord Chamberlain's men," received full recognition and valuable privileges. They henceforth became known as "the King's Servants," and ranked officially with the Grooms of the Chamber. Shakespeare's plays were henceforth frequently acted at Court; between November 1604 and February 1605 his company performed before the King no less than eleven times. Upon James's solemn entry into London in March 1604, the players formed a part of the procession, vested in scarlet cloth bestowed on them for the occasion. These circumstances seem irreconcilable with the theory that Shakespeare's depression at this period of his life was due to mortification at a decline in public favour.

Shakespeare's public connection with the drama was nevertheless interrupted in 1603 by an outbreak of the plague, which put a stop to dramatic performances in London. Having now a country residence, he would, no doubt, retire to it, and would be able to spend a considerably longer time there than the pressure of the theatrical profession could previously have allowed. These circumstances may probably be connected with the production of one of his plays, *The Taming of the Shrew*. This piece, like the old play (1594) from which it is adapted, is preceded by an Induction, setting forth the merry gest of the tinker, Christopher Sly. Shakespeare's version contains local allusions to the neighbourhood of Stratford which, as Halliwell-Phillipps suggests, seem out of place if the play were not intended for representation there. The piece cannot be placed earlier than 1599, not being in Meres's list, nor could it have existed in its present form until Shakespeare had obtained a residence at Stratford. Not more than half of it is from his pen, and it seems tolerably certain that it was hastily put together for performance on some especial occasion, which Fleay reasonably supposes to have occurred in 1603, when he would have most time at his command, and when his company, banished from London by the plague, might probably be touring in the neighbourhood. The old play was entitled "The Taming of a Shrew." It bears no trace of Shakespeare's hand. The under-plot of Bianca and Lucentio, probably written by some coadjutor, is borrowed from Ariosto's comedy of *I Suppositi*, which Gascoigne had translated. "To Shakespeare," says Mr. Grant White, "belong the re-cast Induction and all the scenes in which Katharine and Petruchio and Grumio are the prominent figures, together with the general effect produced by scattering lines and words and phrases."

If this merry little comedy, thus improvised for the amusement of Shakespeare's neighbours, was produced at the period to which we have ascribed it, it was but a gleam irradiating the general sombreness of his dramatic production at the time. It was probably about this period that "the solemn comedy," as Mr. Lee appropriately terms it, *All's Well that Ends Well*, assumed definite shape. This play is generally identified with that mentioned by Meres under the title of *Love's Labour's Won*, which corresponds excellently to the nature of the action. It would be naturally supposed that



Edmund Malone

A celebrated editor and commentator  
of Shakespeare

After the portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds

*"All's Well  
that Ends  
Well"*

a play with this title would be produced soon after the appearance of *Love's Labour's Lost*; but, although there are some traces of archaism, the general style seems incompatible with so early a date; there also seems to be an allusion to *Jack Drum's Entertainment*, a play probably produced in 1600; and Brandes ably shows the affinity of many passages to passages in *Hamlet*.



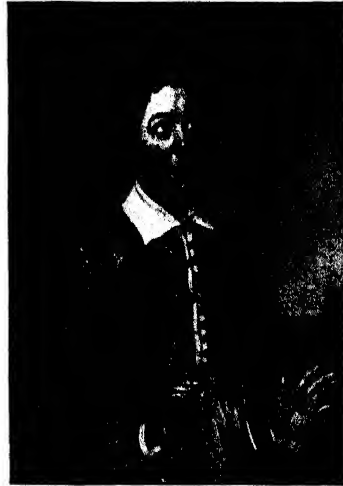
The stage of the Red Bull Playhouse, Clerkenwell

From Kirkman's "*The Wits; or, Sport upon Sport*," 1673

The most probable conclusion would seem to be that Shakespeare thoroughly rewrote his early work; and in our opinion this was done at some period not very remote from the composition of *Measure for Measure*, which was certainly in 1603 or 1604. The pieces resemble each other in a want of geniality, strongly contrasting with Shakespeare's earlier productions; and their chief female characters, upon whom everything depends, belong to a type rare among his women, the heroine rather made to be admired than to be loved. Helena and Isabella command our sympathies to the full; the devotion of Helena to the unworthy object of her affections is womanly as well as fine, but we hardly feel at ease with them. The other personages are for the most part either contemptible or uninteresting. The love of the noble Helena for Bertram would be hard to

understand if reason could be supposed to have anything to do with the matter; and Shakespeare's geniality has deserted him in dealing with Parolles, though the comedy lacking to the character is abundantly extracted from the situation. Of the genuine Shakespearean comedy, except for the ludicrous situation of the luckless Lucio in *Measure for Measure*, there is little trace in either; and neither has ever been a favourite, though *Measure for Measure*, notwithstanding the needless offensiveness of the low-comedy scenes, takes a high place among Shakespeare's works by the veneration

claimed by the character of Isabella and the depth and pregnancy of the moral lesson taught by the fall of Angelo. The character of the Duke has much affinity to that of James I., and it cannot be doubted that the object of the piece was partly political. James had been kept out of his capital for ten months by the plague, was unknown to most of the citizens, and had been censured for want of accessibility. The Duke in *Measure for Measure* exhibits the wise sovereign temporarily withdrawn from the observation of his subjects, but acquainted in his retirement with all that passes, and reappearing at the proper moment to terminate a business whose intricacy has misled even an Escalus, but the clue to which has always been in his own hands.



Liston as Pompey in "*Measure for Measure*"

In the usual chronology of Shakespeare's plays, *Othello* would appear under 1604. There is a reason, as will appear farther on,

for placing this drama after Shakespeare's retirement to Stratford; and this, Probable date of "*Othello*"

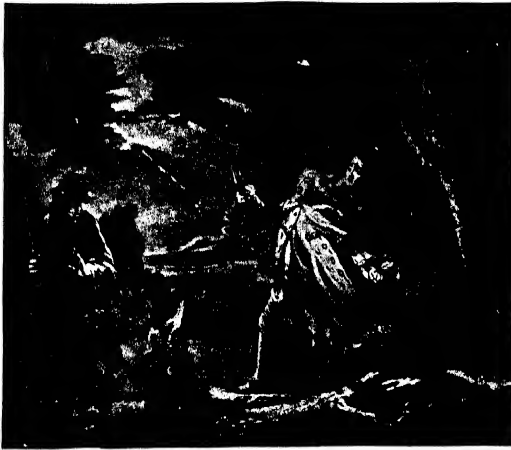
be it worth much or little, is confirmed by one of the most important of the metrical tests. Though not prolific of light and weak endings, *Othello* has nearly the same proportion of double-endings as those undoubted productions of his later period, *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Cymbeline*. If 1604 be really the correct date, it is remarkable that there should be no trace of the existence of so powerful and popular a tragedy until 1609, when a child is christened Desdemona. The alleged record of a Court performance in 1605 is a forgery; on the other hand, the assertion of Malone that he had seen evidence for the date of 1604 which satisfied him is entitled to great weight. If, notwithstanding, we are disposed to bring the accepted date a few years



Cooke as Iago in "*Othello*"

later down, this is mainly from the feeling that, notwithstanding the intensity of the tragedy, we have emerged into a more wholesome atmosphere than

that of *Measure for Measure*, of which this date would make *Othello* a near neighbour. It would seem as though, in writing *King Lear* and *Macbeth*, Shakespeare had purified his own mind by pity and terror. In these dramas the two chief instruments of the tragic poet, according to Aristotle, are wielded by Shakespeare with a grandeur surpassing that which he has displayed anywhere else; and the years 1605 and 1606, to which they respectively belong, may be marked as the culminating period of his power, though not of his art. He is, indeed, favoured by his subjects. The tragedy of *Lear* is not more intense than the tragedy of *Othello*, but it is more exceptional. Groundless jealousy is not an uncommon incident in life, but the ingratitude of Lear's daughters is something absolutely preternatural, and properly accompanied



David Garrick as King Lear

by the portents of storm and tempest which the poet's imagination has conjured up. "The heavens themselves show forth the deaths of princes." Such material sublimity would have been out of place in the domestic tragedy of *Othello*. "The sensation experienced by the reader of *King Lear*," Professor Dowden justly says, "resembles that produced by some grand natural phenomenon." Next to the impression of sublimity

comes that of intense compassion. Lear is the tragedy of helpless old age. From the moment when, yielding to the testiness and waywardness so ordinary with old men, he commits the irretrievable error of his life, to that when he says, "Pray you, undo this button," his thoughts and deeds are those common to humanity in its decline, but represented amid awful environments on a colossal scale. Of the place of Cordelia among Shakespeare's heroines it is needless to speak.

If Lear stands on the pinnacle of pity, Macbeth occupies the pinnacle of terror. No one, the boyish Keats thought, could venture to read it alone at two o'clock in the morning. Yet the pathos is hardly inferior to the terror. It does not consist in the murder of Duncan, piteous as this is; "the ordinance of death is blown in every wind," but

It is not a common chance  
That takes away a noble mind.

The true tragedy is the depravation of such a mind in Macbeth, a man by nature most amiable, a poet in the charm of his language and the delicacy of his sensations, but yielding beneath the influence of a stronger nature,

and unsupported by steadiness of principle. When he has once given admission to the suggestion that it is possible "to win wrongly" without "playing false," his doom is sealed, and the temptings of the weird sisters merely accelerate it. Lady Macbeth is the true evil genius of her husband, and the peculiar pathos of her situation is that for so long she has no suspicion of it. She loves him so well that her love even survives what to her coarser apprehension seems his childish and cowardly scruple. When she perceives the abyss into which she has led him she breaks down, as revealed in the sleep-walking scene, perhaps the highest achievement in all dramatic poetry for the union of pity and terror. The Witches exalt the piece by providing a supernatural background, precipitate a tragedy which would have taken place without them, and incite to the further crime of the murder of Banquo. The ease with which the naturally virtuous Macbeth, having once imbrued his hands in blood, is wrought up to this foul deed, is one of the most striking moral lessons in Shakespeare. The speech of Hecate is probably an interpolation. Other passages, such as the second scene of the first act, can hardly have come from Shakespeare's pen, and the comparative brevity of the piece, with some apparent disproportion in the length of the scenes, has led to the suspicion that it has been systematically reduced to acting proportions by some meddling playwright. There are, indeed, a few indications of retrenchment, but in our opinion this curtness is sufficiently accounted for by the obvious fact that Shakespeare must have had a Court representation of his piece in his mind from the moment that he began to plan it. He was manifestly guided to his subject by the desire to celebrate the accession of James and the consequent union of the English and Scottish crowns, the most important political event of his time. It would have been idle for him to have so laboured if the play had never been seen by him whom it was designed to honour. He must therefore have contemplated a Court representation from the first, and it had doubtless been impressed upon his mind by much mortifying experience, that a Court play must not be too long. The like cause produced the like effect when he wrote *The Tempest*, the only other play, unless the tradition respecting *The Merry Wives of Windsor* can be credited, which he composed with

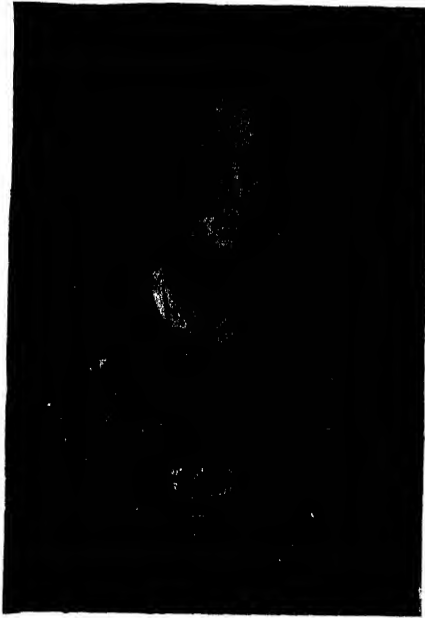


Mrs. Cibber as Cordelia in "King Lear"

the Court mainly in his eye. The result was not unfortunate. "Shake-

speare has employed in the treatment of this subject," says Brandes, "a style that suits it, vehement to violence, compressed to congestion, eminently fitted to express and to show terror." The question whether *Macbeth* was not withheld from the public stage for some time after its Court representation will be considered in another place.

We are now approaching an important era in Shakespeare's life, his re-establishment in his native town. He had ever since 1597 been in possession of the best house in Stratford, and his wife and daughters no doubt habitually dwelt in it, but, so long as he continued to be an actor, his own residences must have been occasional. He had clearly



Macready as Macbeth

purchased it with the view of making it his home when circumstances should allow, and he must have been eager to carry this purpose into effect, especially as he appears to have had no great vocation for the stage. How well he understood the performer's art theoretically the directions to the players in *Hamlet* evince, and his dramas in general display a consummate knowledge of dramatic effect. But sound theory does not necessarily imply successful practice, and the minor part of the Ghost is the only one which tradition has identified with his name. Apart from this, he has recorded his distaste for the theatrical calling in lines of tragic earnestness, which alone refute the Baconian theory of the authorship of the *Sonnets* :

O for my sake do you with Fortune chide,  
The guilty goddess of my harmful  
deeds,



Mrs. Siddons as Lady Macbeth



That did not better for my life provide  
 Than public means, which public manners breeds.  
 Thence comes it that my name receives a brand,  
 And almost thence my nature is subdued  
 To what it works in, like the dyer's hand.  
 Pity me then, and wish I were renewed.

Shakespeare's annual emolument as an actor has been computed at £180, *His settlement at Stratford* or about a third of his probable total income from the Globe Theatre. He had two residences to keep up, and his father having died in September 1601, leaving little if any property beside two houses in Henley Street, he was probably now the sole support of his mother. He would therefore be cautious



The Swan Theatre on the Bankside  
*From a drawing in the British Museum*

about quitting the actor's profession, little as he loved it. The precise time of his emancipation cannot be determined, but may well have been not very remote from his contemptuous mention of the poor player

That struts and frets his hour upon the stage.

A very likely date would be the spring or summer of 1607, in the June of which year his eldest daughter Susanna married Dr. John Hall, a physician of Stratford, and quitted New Place for her husband's house. This would leave Mrs. Shakespeare alone in the house with her second daughter. It may have become necessary that Shakespeare should live more at Stratford; the marriage of his daughter would certainly bring him there, and the conjecture that his residence then became permanent is at all events very plausible. Another motive might be the probably declining health of his aged mother,

who died in the following year. So long as he continued to write plays he would, no doubt, be obliged to reside much in London. We may feel confident, however, that the more he accustomed himself to a country life the more he would be captivated by it, and the brighter and more cheerful character of his dramatic productions after the probable date of his settlement at Stratford may be traced in large measure to its wholesome influences. This settlement will be found to be connected with a peculiarity indisputably apparent in his later work, which will be best explained if considered along with one of the best authenticated of the Stratford traditions respecting him.

Stratford  
tradition  
respecting  
Shakespeare



Quick as Launce in "Two Gentlemen of Verona"

From a drawing by Ramberg

Between 1661 and 1663 the Rev. John Ward, Vicar of Stratford, recorded in a memorandum-book that Shakespeare, after he had taken up his residence there, regularly supplied the London theatre with two plays a year. He must have heard the story in his parish less than fifty years after the death of Shakespeare, and nothing can be more intrinsically probable than the existence of some such contract between Shakespeare and his partners in the Globe. If, nevertheless, the tradition proves at variance with any known facts, it ought to be rejected, but it is, on the contrary, entirely in harmony with a remarkable phenomenon attending Shakespeare's later dramatic work. This is his constant endeavour to diminish the labour of composition. In every play known with certainty to have belonged to his later period, *A Winter's Tale* alone excepted, recourse is had to some device tending to save trouble to the author. In *Troilus and Cressida* he revives a former play. *The Tempest* is the shortest of his dramas. In *Coriolanus* and *Antony and Cleopatra* he leans upon Plutarch. *Pericles* and *Timon* are largely, *Cymbeline* perhaps to some extent, by other hands. In *Henry VIII.* he collaborates with Fletcher. While this slackness is fully in harmony with the circumstances of his residence at Stratford, the alleged contract would explain why his productiveness should still be so considerable. The obligation would pull both ways. Its fulfilment would sometimes be irksome, but would always be necessary. The natural resource would be the employment of any device by which the dramatist's labour might be diminished without lowering the standard of his art. The labour-saving tendency, at all events, is undeniable, and the obligation to produce two plays a year with or without the goodwill of Minerva affords as plausible a way of accounting for it as can be conceived.

It must be inquired, however, whether it is possible so to allot Shakespeare's

work during the last years of his dramatic activity as to justify the assertion of his having for several years regularly provided the theatre with two plays annually? This cannot be said unless the composition or, which would serve equally well, the first public representation of two plays can be brought lower than the generally accepted date. There are only two possible instances, *Othello* and *Macbeth*. Of *Othello* we have spoken. The versification of this play indicates a later period than that of *Lear* or *Macbeth*, and nearly that of *Antony and Cleopatra*. The absence of any trace of it until 1609—perhaps even 1610, when a performance was witnessed by a German prince on his travels in England—is remarkable in the case of a drama not only of transcendent merit, but admirably qualified for popularity. On the other side are two doubtful pieces of external evidence: Malone's statement that he knew it to have been performed in 1604, and the forged entry of its performance at Court in 1605, which *may* have been transcribed from a genuine entry. Decision is difficult.

The question relating to *Macbeth* is curious. The evidence for the date of 1605 or 1606 seems satisfactory, but was there a public representation at that time? The brevity of the play, and the pointed compliments to James I., show that it was



The Falcon Tavern

Believed to have been frequented by Shakespeare and his companions

From Wilkinson's "*Londinia Illustrata*," 1819.

intended for performance at Court. This by no means excludes public representation, but would public representation be then permitted? The Gunpowder Plot had just exploded, and the air was full of treasons and conspiracies. Might not the representation of the murder of a King of Scotland have been thought unseemly and dangerous? The question would hardly have suggested itself but for the fact that in April 1610 the play is a new one to Dr. Simon Forman, a regular playgoer, who describes a performance of it in his diary with a minuteness proving that he had never seen it before, and suggesting that he had never heard of it. None of Shakespeare's dramas is more likely to have been frequently acted; if it had really been a stock-play for four years unknown to Forman, his nescience is extraordinary. On the other hand, there is an apparent allusion to Banquo's ghost in *The Puritan*, a play printed in 1607: "the ghost in white at the head of the table." This seems strong evidence, but would Banquo have been exhibited in a white sheet? This would be contrary to the precedent of Hamlet's father, "in his habit as he lived," and would

*Probable date of "Macbeth"*

interfere with the recognition of Banquo by the spectators. He ought not, in fact, to be visible to them any more than to the guests; but, if visible, he should appear as they have known him, only bearing the tokens of violent death, "blood-boltered," in Macbeth's parlance.

If the admitted difficulties do not prevent the acceptance of the Vicar's intrinsically most probable statement, the chronology of Shakespeare's plays after his settlement at Stratford might be as follows :

*Chronological  
table*

- 1607. *Timon of Athens* ; *Antony and Cleopatra*.
- 1608. *Pericles* ; *Othello*.
- 1609. *Troilus and Cressida* (revival) ; *Cymbeline*.
- 1610. *Macbeth* (first public representation) ; *Coriolanus*.
- 1611. *Winter's Tale* ; *Two Noble Kinsmen* (?)



Miss Yonge and Messrs. Dodd, Waldron, and  
Love in "*Twelfth Night*"

*Engraved by J. R. Smith after a picture by Wheatley*

It will be observed that the arrangement is in pairs, each year producing one complete work of Shakespeare's and one either revived or composed in collaboration with another writer. This is exactly the method likely to be adopted by one anxious to fulfil a burdensome obligation in the easiest way possible without prejudice to his genius and character. After 1611 Shakespeare ceases to write regularly for the stage, and probably disposes of his share in the Globe, which he did not hold at his death.

*The Tempest* and *Henry VIII.* were, as will be shown, produced on special occasions, and belong to 1613.

*"Timon of  
Athens"*

The evidence of style and versification, and the still stronger testimony of a moody and embittered spirit, constrain us to place *Timon of Athens* chronologically at the head of Shakespeare's later writings. It is, indeed, possible that it may be earlier in composition than 1607. *Timon's* affinity to *Lear* has been frequently remarked, and it may be that Shakespeare began to write it soon after the completion of that drama, and after making some progress with it, laid it aside until its production was required by theatrical exigencies. If he had by that time escaped from his period of gloom, he could not but disrelish his own work, and would be likely to commit to another the shaping of what he had rough-hewn. This is a more probable supposition than that he himself completed the work of an inferior dramatist, for in that

case he must have had the last word, and there are faults which he would hardly have been able to forbear correcting. The aid of a coadjutor is manifest, a writer not devoid of talent for the comic and serio-comic, but incapable of tragic dignity. The portions most evidently non-Shakespearean are Act I. from the entry of Apemantus to the end of the banquet; Act III., and Act V., after the last scene in which Timon appears. The genuine parts of the play are very fine, and in every way worthy of Shakespeare; the diction is frequently contorted, but so is Timon. Yet the play never could be popular, if only for want of a female character. Emile Augier has shown in his delightful comedy of *La Cigüe* how a similar theme may be effectively treated, but his vein of light raillery would be impossible to Shakespeare in his actual mood. A Lucianic element which may be detected is probably due to Shakespeare's acquaintance with Boiardo's comedy, *Timone*, which is mainly translated from Lucian. Shakespeare was beyond doubt fairly well versed in Italian.

The close relationship between *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, is shown by the circumstance that, though only *Pericles* was printed, both were entered for publication on the same day, May 20, 1608. Which was first written cannot be known; the probability is that some play entirely from Shakespeare's hand would intervene between two, like *Timon* and *Pericles*, produced with the help of co-laborers. The question, however, is no material, for both show Shakespeare's restoration to a sane and cheerful view of

life. *Antony and Cleopatra* is pre-eminently the work of one interested in "the world's great business." Hardly anywhere else is there such bustle, such variety, such zest for political and military affairs. Shakespeare is thoroughly in charity with his principal characters. His treatment of Cleopatra is purely objective, there is no trace of personal resentment as in his portrait of Cressida. In Antony he has marvellously depicted "the average sensual man," on a far lower plane than a noble idealist like Brutus, but still capable of deep human feeling. This was shown in *Julius Cæsar*, by the great speeches beginning "O pardon me, thou bleeding piece of earth," and "This was the noblest Roman of them all." In *Antony and Cleopatra* this depth of feeling is entirely devoted to a woman; and so intense, especially under the influence of jealousy, so sincere, so single-minded, save for one vacillation under stress of politics, is it that we overlook the fact that we have before us an Antony in decay, no longer able to sway the Roman multitude or school Octavius. Wisdom and policy are gone for ever, even martial honour is dimmed,



Dunstall as Dromio in "The Comedy of Errors"

"Antony and Cleopatra"

but love makes amends for all. Such a picture necessarily implies a corresponding brilliancy in the portrait of Cleopatra, and it is needless to remark that she is perhaps the most wonderful of all Shakespeare's studies of female character. He follows Plutarch's delineation closely, but performs the same miracle upon it as Venus wrought upon the effigy of Galatea: a beautiful image becomes a living being. Perhaps the keynote of the personality is what Shakespeare terms "her infinite variety"; there is room in her for every phase of female character. The same amplitude characterises the play itself, with its great sweep in time and place, its continual changes of scene, its crowd of personages, its multitude of speeches and profusion of poetical imagery. The contrast with *Julius Cæsar* is instructive. There the interest is more



*Pericles*

Mrs. Wells as Lavinia in  
"Titus Andronicus"

From a drawing by Rumberg

concentrated, the characterisation more minute, and the execution more laborious. The ease with which Shakespeare handles his theme in the later play, and the plasticity of the entire subject in his hands, manifest the perfection of his art by dint of practice, but impair the effectiveness of his piece on the stage. The actor has fewer grand opportunities than of yore, and although the drama is resplendent with poetical phrases, there are few sustained outbursts of passion or eloquence. The impersonation of Cleopatra, moreover, demands an actress of mature years. In Shakespeare's time there was no difficulty, for there were no actresses. The representation of his Cleopatra by a *boy* strikes us now as indescribably farcical.

What once seemed the knotty problem of *Pericles* has been satisfactorily resolved by modern criticism. The first two acts contain little or nothing of Shakespeare,

but the last three, except for Gower's verses, are entirely his, even the brothel scenes, as we agree with Brandes in considering. Saving for these scenes, which are essential to the story, these acts make a charming little drama, a pleasing forerunner of the later style of Shakespeare's romantic comedy. He probably took the subject out of incompetent hands, but it must remain a question whether he merely continued their work or replaced what they had written by new work of his own. The description of the storm at the beginning of the third act is finer than anything similar in *The Tempest*, and a proof that Shakespeare had "gone down to the sea in ships, and occupied his business in great waters." The character of the good physician Cerimon may adumbrate Dr. John Hall, just become a member of his family.

The end of the year 1608 seems to us, on the whole, the most probable date for *Othello*, though it is always dangerous to prefer an opinion based mainly upon internal evidence, in opposition to the weakest external testimony. The painfulness of the subject has led the play to be classed among the productions of Shakespeare's pessimistic period; but he might have taken up such a theme at any time, and it is difficult to see how his treatment could have been fundamentally different. It is true that in Iago he has drawn what he has drawn nowhere else, except in *Much Ado about Nothing*, an utterly irredeemable and inexcusable villain; but nothing short of such diabolical malice and craft could extenuate the fault of Othello, who must retain our sympathy at any cost. Perhaps, if any one play could be singled out as Shakespeare's masterpiece, it would be this. As a domestic tragedy, it cannot possess the sublimity of *Lear* or the charm of *As You Like It*, nor can it "call up spirits from the vasty deep" like *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* and *The Tempest*. But it is perhaps, the most perfect specimen of art, every line adapted with infallible judgment to produce the total impression desired, that Shakespeare has given us.

*Troilus and Cressida* was unquestionably produced at the beginning of 1609, but, as has been stated, was probably written some years earlier. If, however, the preface to an unauthorised reprint can be trusted, it had never been acted, and would therefore be available to help Shakespeare to keep his contract with the theatre. The anonymous prefacer deserves some credit, for he approves himself at least as good a judge of Shakespeare's merits as Ben Jonson was, and even speaks by the spirit of prophecy: "This author's comedies are so framed to the life that they serve for the most common commentaries of all the actions of our lives. . . . And believe this, that when he is gone, and his comedies out of sale, you will scramble for them, and set up a new English inquisition."

The spring of 1609 was signalised by another unauthorised publication, that of the *Sonnets*. The well-digested arrangement shows that the text was derived from some accurate copy. The publication may be supposed to have given Shakespeare much annoyance, but no expression of his feelings is extant. There is but one record of his having protested against the liberties so frequently taken with his works and his name.

*Cymbeline* may be most safely placed in the latter part of 1609. The following year would suit equally well, but that Beaumont and Fletcher's *Philaster*, in which traces of *Cymbeline* are to be found, had apparently been acted before



Miss Horton as Ariel in  
"The Tempest"

Publication of  
"Troilus"

Publication of  
the "Sonnets"

October 1610. *Cymbeline*, moreover, seems to follow *Othello* as its complement and corrective. If earlier than *Coriolanus*, this drama marks decisively the transition to the poet's

last manner, already apparent in *Macbeth*, *Othello*, and *Antony and Cleopatra*, a style of growing obscurity as regards diction, but as regards versification of growing freedom, evinced in the constantly increasing tendency to unstopped lines, light and weak endings, and redundant syllables at the verse's end. Judged by the metrical tests alone, *Coriolanus* would appear to be earlier than *Cymbeline*, but, though these tests are not to be neglected, they are not absolutely conclusive. The most important, the proportion of double endings, is partly governed by the character of the play. The double-ending, imparting elasticity to the verse in virtue of the catalectic syllable, is more appropriate to buoyant



Title-page of the First Folio edition of Shakespeare

*From the copy in the British Museum*

spirits and enthusiastic romance; while the close-ending rather befits tragic passion and solemn pathos. It is, therefore, quite intelligible that *Cymbeline* should have more double-endings than *Coriolanus*. Brandes confidently places the latter drama in 1608. To us it seems that the comparatively



laboured and involved diction forbids so close an approximation to the date of *Antony and Cleopatra*. It appears much nearer to the more elaborate speeches in *A Winter's Tale*, which undoubtedly appeared in 1611.

*Cymbeline* is the spoiled child among Shakespeare's dramas. It abounds with careless and provoking faults, but is so full of inimitable natural beauties that all is forgotten and forgiven, and "rapture" is the only word to define the total impression. Wildly improbable as the story is, it enchains the attention throughout; the incidents are so beautiful and touching that we feel they ought to have happened if they did not. Imogen is a combination of all the varied excellences of woman, devoted beyond example, trustful and confiding without weakness, patient and meek, yet with spirit for the most hazardous undertakings; a wife with all the charm of girlhood. The scenes with Belarius and his pupils in the woods reveal the same Shakespeare who drew the banished Duke and his company in the Forest of Arden. But the most remarkable feature of *Cymbeline* is its ushering in a wide and tolerant view of life, depending upon experience and knowledge; more sound and durable,

*Dramatic  
quality of  
"Cymbeline"*



Shakespeare's Signature

*From his Will at Somerset House*

therefore, than the early geniality which depended upon temperament. This had not withstood the deceptions and mortifications of middle life, but here, and still more conspicuously in *A Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*, Shakespeare is upon a rock, serene and invincible. The dominant note of all these plays is forgiveness. The quality of mercy is, indeed, somewhat strained in the two later plays, but not here, where Shakespeare has extenuated the sin of Posthumus by making him yield unwillingly to what appears irresistible evidence; and that of Iachimo by representing him as a heedless man of fashion whose code of morals allows him no proper sense of the infamy of his conduct, and who, when he does perceive it, is overwhelmed by remorse. The conclusion leaves a perfect sense of satisfaction, save for two faults which might easily have been avoided—the nonsense of the soothsayer and the posthumous condemnation of the wicked queen, not for poisoning, but for patriotism.

If, as we have suggested, *Macbeth* was first given to the public stage early in 1610, it was still substantially the same play that the Court had seen in 1606, even though resemblances to the diction of *Cymbeline* should be thought to strengthen the probability of its having been revised for the public stage about the time of the production of the latter drama, which would also

account for some metrical peculiarities. We pass, therefore, to the ripest fruit of Shakespeare's maturity, *Coriolanus*. As the poet in *Cymbeline*, so here the statesman is most prominent; and the date of 1610, defensible on other grounds, is rendered more probable by the political excitement of that year arising from the dissensions between King and Parliament. This view has been condemned as fanciful. We subscribe, nevertheless, to Sarrazin's opinion that "We are continually discovering that the great dramatist wrote more for his time and from his time than we have been accustomed to think." Nothing could move him more sensibly than this contest between Crown and Commons, King's servant as he was, under special obligation to his sovereign, and entirely conservative in his views of society and politics. He had already poured withering scorn upon the English mob in his picture of Cade and his rabble followers, and upon the Roman mob in the scenes attending Cæsar's funeral; *Coriolanus* gave him an opportunity of striking not merely at the multitude but at their leaders, for the Tribunes correspond to the refractory members of the lower House. The opportunity is used unsparingly, but at the same time the play is kept from degenerating into a party manifesto, not by extenuating the faults of the populace, but by pointing out equal faults in the aristocracy represented by *Coriolanus*. Shakespeare has merely to follow the narrative of Plutarch, which shows how the pride of a high-minded man, over-conscious of his real worth, begets haughtiness, and haughtiness insolence, and insolence unpopularity, and unpopularity banishment, and banishment treason, and how treason would have begotten infamy if, yielding to his better inspired mother and spouse, he had not at the last moment redeemed his honour at the sacrifice of his life. The admirable construction of the play is perhaps rather due to Plutarch than to Shakespeare; the characters, unsurpassable for force and truth, are mainly modelled after his hints; but Shakespeare, who never saw a Roman, has assimilated the Roman spirit far more perfectly than Plutarch, who lived under the sway of Rome. Menenius, Virgilia, Volumnia, are not moderns in classical masquerade, but Romans come to England. No play of Shakespeare's is more replete with pithy wisdom; but this is sometimes impaired by contorted obscurity of expression. He has in general such power of delivering himself as he wishes that he has become impatient and resentful of difficulties, and when they arise coerces language in an imperious fashion neither consistent with elegance nor with perspicuity.

"*A Winter's Tale*"

*A Winter's Tale* had probably not been long upon the stage when Simon Forman saw it in May 1611. All the new features of style and versification conspicuous in *Cymbeline* and *Coriolanus* are developed in this play to a still further extent. In borrowing his plot from Greene's *Pandosto*, Shakespeare appears to us to have for the first time built upon a sandy foundation. The interval of time in the middle, making virtually two dramas, is unfortunate; but the main defect is the utter unreasonableness of the jealousy of Leontes, which makes the foundation of the action. In such cases sympathy should be excited for the misguided offender as well as for the injured innocents.

Shakespeare has achieved this for Othello and Posthumus, but with Leontes even his art fails; the case is too flagrant. It may be granted that, psychologically, the character is a splendid study of monomania, of obsession by one fixed idea, but the exhibition of such unreason begets a feeling of angry impatience in the spectator, which cannot be allayed even by the nobility of Hermione, or the marvellous vigour and truth of the portrait of Paulina. The last two acts, on the other hand, revive the Shakespeare of *As You Like It*, who has written nothing more truly delectable than this rural idyll, the charm of which is enhanced by the consideration that he is himself a part of it, now that he is living in the country and depicting the life around him. In Perdita and her successor Miranda he displays

An art  
Which does mend nature—change it rather, but  
The art itself is nature.

All his preceding heroines have been carefully and substantially painted,

GOOD FREND FOR IESVS SAKE FORBEARE,  
TO DICC THE DVST ENCLOSED HEARE:  
BLESE BE <sup>E</sup>Y MAN Y SPARES THES STONES,  
AND CVRST BE HE <sup>T</sup>Y MOVES MY BONES.

The Inscription on Shakespeare's grave in Stratford Church

and we well know why we admire them. They "have titles manifold." Perdita and Miranda are beautiful visions, ethereal impersonations of ideal loveliness; they do nothing, for they have nothing to do; and yet we have as clear a mental picture of them as of any of their forerunners, and are as entirely in love with them as their own swains can be. This is especially the case with Miranda; something more of substantiality is communicated to Perdita by the outbreak of pride and spirit in the midst of her humiliation, so delicately introduced to indicate that, though she knows it not, her veins run with royal blood:

I was not much afeard: for once or twice  
I was about to speak, and tell him plainly  
The self-same sun that shines upon his Court  
Hides not his visage from our cottage.

*The Two Noble Kinsmen*, in which Shakespeare is thought to have co-operated with Fletcher, may be probably assigned to 1611. The theory of the joint authorship has the support of the two writers' alliance in *Henry VIII.* two years later, and of the publication of the play with both their names in 1634. It further fits in well with the tradition of Shakespeare's obligation to furnish two plays annually at a time when he was becoming

"*The Two  
Noble Kins-  
men*"

more and more absorbed in the details of country life, and less and less inclined to write for the stage. His hand is most discernible in the first and fifth acts. "All the passages," says Mr. Lee, "for which he can on any showing be held responsible develop the main plot, which is drawn from Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*." The omission of the play from the Folio is not a proof that Shakespeare had no share in it, for the editors left out *Pericles*, and, as Mr. Fleay makes probable, were on the point of omitting *Timon*.

"*The  
Tempest*"

After *Hamlet*, *The Tempest* has the most personal interest of any of Shakespeare's works, for as his last important production it gives his latest views on life and mankind. It follows out the same tendency as has been remarked in *Cymbeline* and *The Winter's Tale*, to large and liberal views of life, serene tranquillity, contented acquiescence in the lot of man, tolerance of imper-

HEERE LYETH INTERRED THE BODY OF ANNE WIFE  
OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE WHO DEPTED THIS LIFE THE  
6.<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF AVGV. 1623 BEING OF THE AGE OF 67 YEARES  
Vbera. tu mater. tu lac. vitamq. dedisti  
Vae mihi pro tanto munere saxa dabo  
Quam mallet. amoueat lapidem. bonus angl' ore  
Exeat christi corpus imago tua  
Sed nil vota yalent venias cito Christe resurget  
Clausa licet tumulto mater et astra petet

The Inscription on the grave of Shakespeare's Wife in Stratford Church

fections and forgiveness of injuries. All these precepts are impersonated in Prospero, whose situation as a person raised above common humanity by his transcendent knowledge and his sway over the unseen world enables him to announce them with the authoritative solemnity of a messenger from heaven. That they represent Shakespeare's ultimate conclusions cannot be doubted, for the play, which bears every token of Shakespeare's latest manner, cannot have been written until after the appearance of Sylvester Jourdain's account of the tempest at the "Bermoothes," published in October 1610. There is not the least reason to suppose that Shakespeare immediately founded a drama upon this pamphlet. The improbability of his having done so is shown by the likelihood that *A Winter's Tale*, brought out in the late winter or early spring of 1611, was then in preparation. Shakespeare would not take up another theme till this was off his hands. *The Tempest*, then, can in no case be earlier than 1611, and the present writer thinks he has almost proved it to have been written in 1612-1613 for performance at Court on occasion of the nuptials of James's daughter Elizabeth with the Elector Palatine, a view

which greatly enhances the piece's beauty, ingenuity, and significance. The discussion would be too long for our space, and the reader must be referred to the author's *Essays of an Ex-Librarian*.<sup>1</sup>

The source of the plot of *The Tempest* has until lately been a mystery, and even the most recent writers seem unacquainted with the important discovery by Edmund Doré of a Spanish novelette from which it is evidently derived, unless Shakespeare and the Spaniard resorted to a common source. The story, a most dull and pedantic production, occurs in a collection entitled *Noches de Invierno* (Winter Nights), by Antonio de Esclava, Madrid, 1609 (the last of the multitudinous licences is dated in September). The plot is thus summarised by Anders (*Shakespeare's Books*):—

Source of the  
plot

Dardanus, King of Bulgaria, a virtuous magician, is dethroned by Niciphorus, Emperor of Greece, and has to flee with his only daughter, Seraphina. They go on board a little ship. In mid-ocean Dardanus, having parted the waters, rears by art of magic a beautiful submarine palace, where he resides with his daughter till she becomes marriageable. Then the father, in the disguise of a fisherman, carries off the son of Niciphorus to his palace under the sea. The youth falls in love with the maiden. The Emperor having died in the meantime, Dardanus returns with his daughter and his son-in-law to his former kingdom, which he leaves the latter to rule over, while he withdraws into solitude.

This is unquestionably the groundwork of the plot of *The Tempest*. It is some argument for Shakespeare having obtained it directly from Esclava, and not from a common source, that the title of Esclava's book, *Noches de Invierno*, may have suggested to him the title of *A Winter's Tale*, which he began to write in 1610, the year following the publication of the Spanish stories.

*The Tempest* is the most worthy conclusion imaginable of Shakespeare's dramatic career. It is a noble sunset. All is serenity, and all is splendour. The poetry is of the highest order. The action is admirably planned. The balance between the serious and the comic elements is most happily maintained. Of the imagination that could create a Caliban and an Ariel nothing need be said, and we have spoken already of its scarcely less marvellous exercise in embodying that adorable phantom, Miranda. We need not doubt that Prospero's book and staff are Shakespeare's own, and that Shakespeare partly impersonated himself in the benevolent magician. Yet not entirely.

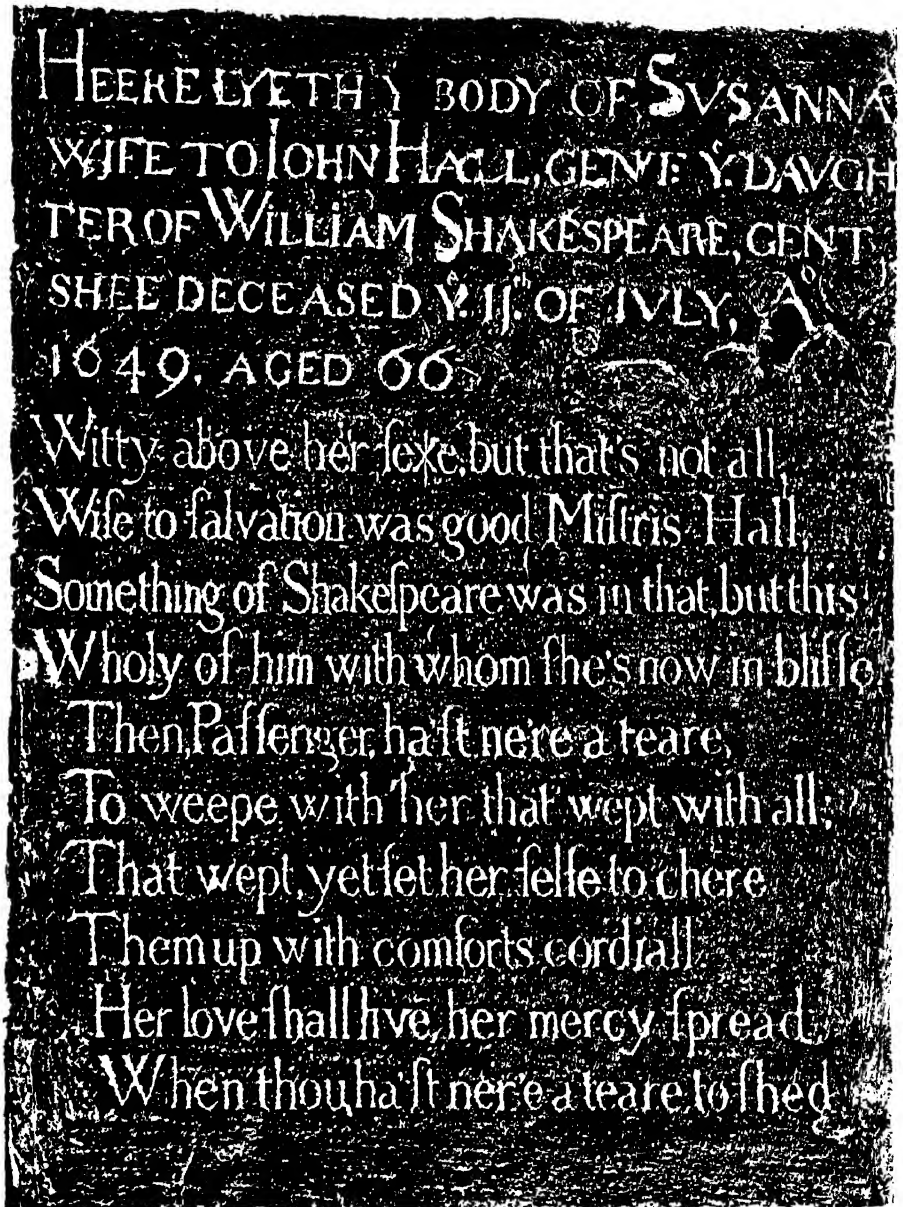
Shakespeare,  
Prospero and  
James I.

<sup>1</sup> One confirmatory circumstance may be added, not observed by the author when he wrote, but pointed out by the writer of a German essay (in a *Schul-Programm*, he thinks), whose name has unfortunately passed from his remembrance. In Act I., scene 2, Prospero inquires from Ariel the time of day, and is told that it is "past the mid season." He replies:

"At least two glasses: The time twixt six and now  
Must by us both be spent most preciouslly."

Why should the hour be two in the afternoon? The average day of twelve hours represents what, slightly departing from the letter of Scripture to suit the duodecimal system by which diurnal time is measured, should be the normal term of human existence, seventy-two years. Allowing six years to the hour, two in the afternoon answers to forty-eight years, Shakespeare's precise age when he wrote *The Tempest*, if this was written for the Princess Elizabeth's marriage. Prospero's admonition to him, that his remaining time must be "spent most preciouslly" corresponds to his concluding declaration that henceforth "Every third thought shall be my grave."

Prospero betrays foibles which Shakespeare would not have put to his own account, and his confession that he lost his dukedom through seclusion from



The Inscription on the grave of Shakespeare's Daughter in Stratford Church

affairs of State, "rapt in secret studies," is manifestly intended as a warning to James, whose family concerns are the veiled subject of the piece, and whose ideal of himself is faithfully reproduced in Prospero's character. As we have written elsewhere, "A wise, humane, pacific prince, gaining his

ends not by violence but by policy ; devoted to far-off purposes which none but himself can realise, much less fathom ; independent of counsellors, safely contemptuous of foes, and controlling all about him by his superior wisdom ; keeping in the background till the decisive hour has struck, and then interfering effectually ; devoted to lawful knowledge, but the sworn enemy of black magic—such was James in James's eyes, and such is Prospero."<sup>1</sup>

Shakespeare's magic book, nevertheless, was not cast so deeply into the sea that it could not upon occasion, like Timon's gold in Lucian, be fished up <sup>'Henry VIII.'</sup>



Two views of Shakespeare's Bust at Stratford-on-Avon

*Specially photographed to show the curious difference between the two profiles*

again. The metre of *Henry VIII.* alone would betoken a very late date, even if we did not know that it was in course of performance when, on June 29, 1613, the Globe Theatre was burned down. These metrical peculiarities are not all of one kind ; some portions indicate beyond dispute the authorship of Fletcher, while the metre of other parts is fully consistent with the authorship of Shakespeare. That Shakespeare had a hand in it is certain from its appearance in the First Folio during Fletcher's lifetime. The editors must certainly have known who wrote the play that burned down their own theatre ! The play is evidently a hasty piece of work, produced in response to a popular

<sup>1</sup> *Essays of an Ex-Librarian.*

demand, which can hardly have been unconnected with the great event of the day, the marriage of the Princess Elizabeth. It was not, like *The Tempest*, designed for representation at Court, but was meant to symbolise by the marriage of Anne Boleyn, the general relief at the Princess having made a Protestant match, and not espoused a Roman Catholic prince, which correspondence among the State Papers shows to have been much apprehended. The expedition necessary that the drama might appear while the marriage was still a topic of universal interest would involve the co-operation of two dramatists, and Shakespeare, by Ben Jonson's testimony the most facile writer of his day, and lately a proprietor of the theatre where the play was to be acted, was of all men the most likely to be invoked to help Fletcher. The portions that may be most confidently ascribed to him are Act I, scene 1; Act II., scenes 2 and 3; Act V., scene 1. All are worthy of him, if regarded as improvisations, as in fact they were. Fletcher also has written well, the fine speech of Cranmer at Elizabeth's christening brings the subject to the most satisfactory conclusion of which it admits, and would be received with enthusiasm by an audience remembering that Elizabeth was also the christian-name of the Princess whom the play was written to honour. The dramatists have shown tact in availing themselves to the utmost of Katharine's pathetic situation, without blackening King Henry, which would have ruined their design. The participation of Massinger has been suspected; but if he was, as generally believed, a Roman Catholic, he cannot well have co-operated in so Protestant a play.

*Shakespeare's  
last years*

If our view of the origin of *Henry VIII* is correct, our last glimpse of Shakespeare as an author reveals him in the act of rendering a good-natured service to a fellow dramatist, an attitude entirely in keeping with his character. His remaining years were few, and the notices of him are few also. In March 1613 he bought a house in Blackfriars, which he immediately leased; in November 1614 he was in London on apparently local business; in February 1616 his daughter Judith married Thomas Quiney. The serene spirit of his latest plays coincides with the date of his residence at Stratford, and could not well have been his if he had not been living in the enjoyment of domestic tranquillity. He can hardly have felt any deep affection for the wife with whose society he had dispensed for so long, but continuous dispeace would hardly have escaped the Stratford gossips. The eccentric bequest to his wife of his second-best bed must have been explicable by some circumstance unknown to us. Could it have been Mrs. Shakespeare's marriage-bed? The will which conveyed it, and at the same time gave evidence of his affection for his daughters and his remembrance of his old theatrical comrades, was executed on March 25, 1616. The testator declares himself to be then "in perfect health," but by April 23 he was no more. According to a tradition preserved by Ward, his death was occasioned by a fever contracted at a jovial meeting with Ben Jonson and Drayton. It may be doubted whether Ben was sufficiently well affected to Shake-



speare and Drayton to come down to Warwickshire to drink with either of them.<sup>1</sup>

On April 25 Shakespeare was interred in the parish church, and honoured with a tomb in the chancel, not as a poet, but as an impropiator of tithes. His grave was covered with a flat stone, bearing the inscription known to all, artless indeed, but adapted to the capacity of the sextons for whose admonition it was designed. But ere long, certainly by 1623, when it is mentioned by

*Shakespeare's  
Tomb and  
Monument*



The chancel of Stratford Church, showing Shakespeare's Bust

Leonard Digges, an elaborate monument, including the famous bust, was erected in the chancel, at the cost, tradition affirms, of his daughter Susanna Hall. The terse Latin distich inscribed upon it celebrates Shakespeare's wisdom, urbanity, and genius for epic poetry, but is silent as to his work as a dramatist :

Judicio Pylum, genio Socratem, arte Maronem,  
Terra tegit, populus maeret, Olympus habet.

The temper of Sophocles no less than his genius resembled Shakespeare's,

<sup>1</sup> In the very year of Shakespeare's death Jonson ridiculed *The Tempest* and *Henry V.* in a prologue to *Every Man in his Humour*, not in the first edition. His professed eulogium on Drayton appears to us a thinly disguised satire.

but, instead of the expected *Sophoclem*, we get *Socratem* at the expense of a false quantity. One is led to suspect that the writer disapproved of plays, in which case he may well have been Shakespeare's son-in-law, Dr. John Hall, a Latin scholar with Puritan leanings. If so, we have testimony to the affection with which Shakespeare was regarded in his own family; further evinced by the bestowal of his surname as a christian-name upon the eldest son of his daughter Judith, born in the November succeeding his death. The English lines upon the monument were probably composed by some friend in London.

Space forbids our attempting any survey of Shakespeare's literary or intellectual character. Inexhaustible themes for discussion are afforded by his probable views on religion and politics, his obligations to predecessors and his relations to contemporaries, his appreciation in his own day and his influence on the after-world. The comparative fulness of the treatment which, nevertheless, we have been able to accord him, will not appear disproportionate when it is considered with what remoteness from all possible competition he stands forth as Britain's national poet. To remove any other great poet from our literature would be to lop off a limb from a many-branching tree, to remove Shakespeare would be to take the sun out of heaven.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE JACOBAN POETS

THE authors who will be considered in the remaining chapters of this volume were all of them liable in earlier and laxer periods of literary history to be treated as being what was vaguely called "Elizabethan." Fifty years ago it awakened no protest to see Shirley described as an Elizabethan dramatist and Hall as an Elizabethan prose-writer, although the former was only seven years old when the great Queen passed away, and although the latter survived until within four years of the Restoration. All that was seen in the general survey was the burst of production between the reign of Mary and the Commonwealth, and to this it was natural to assign the name of its most picturesque and romantic patron. But we realise now the inconvenience of treating this complex period under one heading, and we see, moreover, a subtle difference between the character of what was written in England during the reign of Elizabeth and the character of what belongs to James I. It is often objected that monarchs have nothing to do with literature, and that a division of poetry and prose effected on monarchical lines must be perfunctory and fallacious. But in times when the sovereign was the active source of public feeling, when everything that moulded national life was attached, as with strings or rays, to the steps of the Throne, a modification of the arts might be directly consequent on the death of a ruler.

In the case of Elizabeth this was more than commonly true, and we are perfectly justified in drawing an invisible line across the chronicle of our literature at the year 1603, and in calling what precedes it Elizabethan and what follows it Jacobean. The death of the Queen was a signal, for which the intellectual part of the country had, more or less consciously, been respectfully waiting. It meant very much more than a different set of costumes at Hampton Court or a new head on the coinage. It meant the introduction of a fresh era, which had long been preparing, but which reverence and awe for a venerable lady had restrained. Everybody who suffered from the severity of the old *régime* greeted the new reign with hopefulness. The new monarch, conscious of the somewhat unwelcome part he had to play, was lavish in his declarations of universal encouragement and kindliness. Elizabeth had outlived almost every one of those who had helped her to usher in her peculiar systems, political, ecclesiastical and social. Her prestige, as of a noble aged creature, majestic in her extreme fragility, preserved itself

in an artificial abstraction. She died, and as her subjects reverently bowed their heads, they might be overheard to breath a sigh of relief.

In literature the change was subtler and less direct than it was in politics. It would be an absurd mistake to seek for any sudden change. The alteration was made gradually ; it is more a matter of tone or colour than an abrupt matter of form. But, looking broadly at English books from 1580 to 1625, we see towards the middle of that period a tendency to alteration which is the more palpable the further we recede from it. It is like the general aspect of a rolling range of mountain where, at a due distance, we perceive diffused light on the one side, diffused shadow on the other. This symbol may be the more readily accepted, because the general trend is unquestionably to the peak of Shakespeare and then gently down into the flat country again. The Elizabethan period is the sun-lighted ascent, the Jacobean is the more and more deeply shadowed decline. But round the central height, on what we may call the upland alps, the altitude is so great and the luminosity of the atmosphere so general that we do not inquire whether we happen to stand on the side of rise or of descent. Nevertheless, an element, very difficult to define, distinguishes Marlowe, who is entirely on the ascending plane, from Ben Jonson, who is very near the summit, and who spreads around it, and who yet is definitely and unavoidably, in the main body of his work, at that place where the general slope begins to decline.

For one thing, the death of the stubborn and dauntless Elizabeth marked the final break-up of that survival of mediæval sentiment which she had so resolutely upheld. Certain prejudices of the Queen had succeeded in preventing, or delaying, the fusion of those great elements which flowed through England during the middle of her reign. She separated them, she kept them from mingling in one great national channel, but this unification was inevitable, and it proceeded as soon as her powerful hands were relaxed. All through her reign the Renaissance, which had arrived in England so tardily, was still further delayed in its action by the surviving traditions of the Middle Ages. The new learning, the new ardour for beauty, the new habit of speculation, were all busy in Elizabeth's reign, but they were not allowed freely to communicate with one another. They were partly intermingled, but they were not blended into a consistent and progressive unity. This result of this lack of fusion was that, even in their most brilliant developments, something of an exotic character was retained. In poetry, to take an example which comes directly home to us, certain series of beautiful pieces of writing might be termed Italian, or Latin, or even French, by an observer anxious to minimise the originality of the new English literature. But with the withdrawal of the restraints of Elizabeth, our writings immediately became nationalised, and there could no longer be a question that, for good or ill, they represented direct the instincts and aspirations of the English people, and not those of a cluster of refined scholars in a college, or of the courtiers who collected round some Italianated nobleman.

If, moreover, any irresolute English author had been inclined to doubt



Title-page of the "Works of King James I." 1619

whether the practice of literature would be tolerated during the new reign, his fears might well have been founded on the apprehension that the monarch was too much rather than too little interested in the art of letters. In King JAMES VI. and I. the London poets came forward to welcome one who was so far from "hating boetry"—like one of his successors—that he had laboured with zeal to become a poet himself. Nor was verse the only medium in which James VI. of Scotland had exercised his abilities. He was no less ambitious to shine in prose, as theologian, as critic, as sociologist, as publicist. No writer in the glorious galaxy of his English subjects, not even Bacon and Raleigh, sought to excel in so many fields of literature as the King; certainly none was so confident, in his sanguine moments, that he had succeeded in all. No one, in the presence of Apollo, affected more ecstasy, or assumed a greater claim to poetic immortality.

I shall your names eternal ever sing,  
 I shall tread down the grass on Parnass hill,  
 By making with your names the world to ring,  
 I shall your names from all oblivion bring,  
 I lofty Virgil shall to life restore,—

sang King James VI. very lustily in his *Invocations to the Gods*, and his were none of those elegant and trivial efforts at genteel penmanship which royal personages in all ages have conceived to be a graceful amateur pastime. There was nothing of the amateur about James. He aimed at no less glory than is given by "the perfection of Poesy, whereunto few or none can attain." Moreover, he was in this also, so far as he went, a genuine man of letters, that he saw, and poignantly and repeatedly deplored, his own deficiencies. Criticism, which could otherwise hardly treat the grotesque works of James I. with patience, is disarmed by his candour. "Alas!" he says, "God by nature hath refused me the like lofty and quick genius"—which he is applauding in the French poet Du Bartas—"and my dull muse, age and fortune have refused me the like skill and learning." Later on in life, when the King still hankered after literary glory, still stretched on tiptoe to pluck a leaf from the golden laurel which, after all, he found to hang too high for him, his judgment was better than his practice. He could not pretend even to his subjects that he was satisfied with his own prose or verse, and there is something really pathetic in the way in which he alternates sentences of royal truculence with apologies for imperfections due to burdens of office so great and so continual, and to a spirit that never has leave to be "free and unvexed." Evidence seems to prove that the King's modest estimate of his own genius was more than acknowledged in England, and literary aspirants had to be very poor or in great personal danger before they brought themselves down to flattering the monarch as a writer. But, in an age so abundantly autocratical, there must have been something extremely gratifying to the mind of authors in knowing that any one of them could hope to do better than the despot what the despot of all things most desired to do.

**James VI.** of Scotland and I. of England (1566–1625) was the son of Mary, Queen of Scotland, and Lord Darnley. His mother's abdication, the year after



James I.

AFTER THE PORTRAIT BY PAUL VAN SOMER.





his birth, made him King of Scotland, and exposed him to extraordinary dangers. Those about him, however, perceived these perils, and his education was conducted with remarkable care and good sense. He became a sound scholar, and his intellectual sympathies were widened almost to the limits of taste and knowledge as understood by the Renaissance of his time in Scotland. He early determined to be an eminent writer, and in 1584, in the midst of the intrigues of politicians contending for his person, he published *The Essays of a Prentice in the Divine Art of Poesie*. These are sonnets, in which the King emulates the French writers of his day, a romance in *rime royal* called *Phoenix*, some short gnomic pieces, and versions of his favourite poet, Du Bartas, and of Lucan. All these, though with some Scotch peculiarities, are essentially and characteristically Elizabethan. In 1588, James began his career as a theologian by the publication of the first of his *Meditations*. In 1591 he issued fresh sets of translations from Du Bartas as *His Majesty's Poetical Exercises at Vacant Hours*, in 1597 a prose dialogue on *Demonology*, and in 1599 his political treatise called *Basiliikon Doron*, dedicated to his son Henry. All these were his publications before, in 1603, he became King of England; after that event he produced *The True Law of Free Monarchies* (1603), *A Counterblast to Tobacco* (1604), *Triplici Nodo Triplex Cuneus* (1607), and a number of controversial works of theology. He permitted his chaplain, Richard Montague (1577-1641), the famous author of the *Appello Casarem*, to collect his *Works* in 1616. This was done, with much greater completeness, by Mr. R. S. Rait in 1900-1901.

If James I., on his arrival at his Southern country, had any time to spare *The Sonneteers* for an inspection of the national poetry, he might observe that the sonnet had undergone rapid and complete development since he, in 1584, and under the guidance of Du Bartas, had been one of the first to cultivate it in the North. The posthumous publication of Sir Philip Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella*, of which an account has already been given, had given a violent stimulus to the fashion of writing sonnets; during the last ten years of Elizabeth this was one of the forms of literature most universally cultivated. The *Delia* of SAMUEL DANIEL, which was very widely enjoyed and imitated, inaugurated the system by which poets enshrined in cycles of sonnets, under a feigned pastoral name, their amatory passion for some cold fair lady or their enthusiastic admiration of some friend. In this, the second period of the English sonnet, close attention was paid to smoothness of versification, and in this respect the performances of the sonneteers were of great value. They made the old rough jingle of the popular poetry intolerable to the ear, by familiarising it with more luxurious and delicate artifice in prosody. Many of the sonnet-cycles, in fact, were no more than exercises in versification, and the best sonneteers, having learned to manipulate iambic verse and to arrange their rhymes, passed on to other business of a broader kind. But some of the sonnet-cycles were valuable in themselves, and free from slavish imitation of Desportes and the other fashionable French models. There is intellectual strength and a certain splendour of imagery in Barnabe Barnes (1569-1609), whose *Parthenophil and Parthenophe* belongs to 1593. Barnes, who had been a soldier in Italy and France, had a wide knowledge of the writings of the Pléiade,

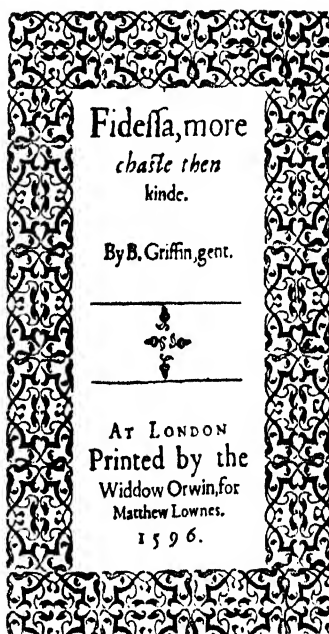
justice according to goodes aorde, & sufficient provision for thaire sustentacion & comlie ordain  
 in thaire justice, the pryde ymaged, humilitee aduanced, & justice & reverence thaire  
 superior, & thaire glorie & chaunce, as the shewing of your estate in peace piers, &  
 & learning may be one of the chey prynces of your earthly glorie, being our althow  
 uaire with baird the extremities, althow althow as we pypose the uaire justice & not to  
 suffer prynces paynt bishoppes, but as sum, so thaire qualites will decrease to be prynces  
 before of soft herts, & thaire with sic bandis as maye preserve that estate from corrup  
 to corruption, the more estate now that be ordaine <sup>in purpose</sup> ~~the~~ cummes according to thaire rank is in  
 parliament is the nobilitie & althow seconde in rank yete over farre first in greatness &  
 prynces ether to doe good or euill as they are inclined, the natural seekinges that I have  
 perceaued that estate subiect to in my time has bene a fetyles arroganc conceit of being  
 greater & prynces, drinking in with thaire uaire noorishe milke that thaire honoure  
 seconde in the comynge those points of iniquite, to shal be oppressed the meane, & so  
 that dwellis nere thame & so thaire seruise, following, althow chary hande resting of  
 thaire, to maintaine thame seruantes & dependaies in any wronge althow they be not  
 ansourable to the law for any bodie will mainteine his man in a rouse cause) & so,  
 any displeasure that they apprehende to be done unto thaire be thaire neighbours to take  
 up a paine feade against him, & without respect to god, king, or commonweill to buy  
 ie our braache, & all his kinne against him & all his seruise will climb the way  
 furre in thaire commonne milke they agree to guarantee one guarantee to a shorte  
 daye for keeping of the peace, quharre be thaire naturall deuete they are obligd to obey  
 the law & keepe the peace all the dayes of thaire lyfe upon the porrell of pain

and directly imitates Ronsard and Joachim du Bellay. Here is a typical sonnet by Barnes :

That golden planet, lamp of this world's light,  
 Whose glorious eastern insurrection shows  
 His ceaseless course, whose term no creature knows  
 That silver planet, torch of silent night,  
 Which, when the Sun repositeth his beams bright  
 In western seas, her planet-darts forth throws,  
 Whose influence doth strange events compose ;  
 That boisterous turbulence of north winds' might  
 Which swells and ruffles in outrageous sort ;  
 Those cheerful southern showers whose fruitful dew  
 Brings forth all sustenance for man's comfort ;  
 East, West, North, South, if none thy puissance knew,  
 Relate thy wondrous virtues, and with praise  
 From West to East, from North to South them raise.

Daniel was the master openly accepted in his *Fidessa* of 1596 by Bartholomew Griffin, by the unknown author of *Zepheria* in 1594, by William Percy (1575-1648) in his *Cælia* of 1594, and by Richard Linche in his *Diella* of 1596. It is hardly necessary to point out that there were greater poets than those, independent of the influence of Daniel, who nevertheless had doubtless read the *Delia* and been stimulated by it. Among such accidental or occasional sonneteers we include not Shakespeare merely, but Spenser, in his *Amoretti* of 1595, Drayton in his *Idea's Mirror* of 1594, and Donne. The entire business of sonnet-writing, in which a considerable amount of personal emotion was unquestionably combined with vague and sinuous methods of expression, which often subtly concealed it, was of very great importance as a school of poetic style. It was by composing sonnets in the last years of Elizabeth's reign that the ordinary clever person first learned to use his own language with security and grace.

But in the general practice of these forms the glowing spring-tide of poetry was already on the wane. The victory of imaginative speech had now become so universal that all human thought began naturally to turn to verse whether it was genuinely poetical or not. This was the moment at which men of high talent began to be poets when nature had perhaps intended them rather to excel as historians or philosophers. In the laureate, SAMUEL DANIEL, whose influence we have seen to have been paramount as a sonneteer, we meet with the first example of poetry beginning to wither on the bough. Daniel's



Title-page of Bartholomew Griffin's  
 "Fidessa," 1596

grace, smoothness and purity seem to belong to a much later period, and to a time when the imagination had lost its early fervour. He wrote lengthy historical poems, besides numerous sonnets, masques, and epistles. These last, which have the merit of brevity, are Daniel's most attractive contri-

butions to English literature, and are singularly elegant in their stately, limpid flow of moral reflection. In prose, Daniel showed himself one of the most instructed of our early critics of poetry. Another philosophical writer, on whose style the turbulent passion of the age has left but little mark, is the great Irish jurist, Sir JOHN DAVYS, who, in his youth, composed several poems of the highest merit in their limited field. In his *Nosce Teipsum*, a treatise of considerable length and perspicuous dignity, dealing with the immortality of the soul, Davys was the first to employ on a long flight the solemn four-line stanza of which the type is supplied by the *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*. Three years earlier he



Title-page of "The Civile Wares," 1609, with portrait of Daniel

had printed a most ingenious philosophical poem, *Orchestra*, in praise of dancing; and the delicacy of Davys's talent is well seen in a little work less known than either of these, the *Hymns of Astræa*. The *Hymns of Astræa* are neither better nor worse than the ordinary poetical compliments paid to Elizabeth. They certainly do not show Davys at his best. Both Daniel and Davys offer early and distinguished examples

of the employment of imagination to illuminate elaborate mental processes.

**Samuel Daniel** (1562-1619) was the son of a music-master at or near Taunton, where he was born towards the end of 1562. At the age of seventeen he was entered a commoner of Magdalen College, Oxford. Here he stayed three years, but, having devoted himself more to English history and poetry than to "pecking and hewing at logic," he left the University without a degree. Daniel's first publication was *A Worthy Tract of Paulus Jovius*, in prose (1585). But this was

*Samuel  
Daniel*

an accidental exercise, for he was really giving himself heart and soul to the study of poetry, having, he says, "adventured to bestow all my powers therein." Daniel spent some time in Italy, and appears to have been personally acquainted with the poet Guarini, whose *Pastor Fido* brought him into fame in 1590. Daniel was slow to give his writings to the public, and his earliest sonnets appeared, surreptitiously, in Nash's (1591) edition of Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella*. Finally, in February 1592, the first edition of Daniel's *Delia* appeared, with the romance of *The Complaint of Rosamond* appended to it. The publications of Daniel now became abundant—in 1594, the archaic tragedy of *Cleopatra*; in 1595, *The First Four Books of the Civil Wars*; in 1599, *Musophilus* and *A Letter from Octavia*. In 1601 Daniel, now one of the most popular living



Anne Clifford, Countess of Dorset

*After the portrait by Mytens*

writers, collected his *Works*. He became tutor to William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, and afterwards to Anne Clifford at Appleby and at Skipton, until he resigned his charge in 1602. Daniel welcomed the King and Queen in Rutland as they were approaching London with a stately and far from obsequious *Panegyric*; the sovereigns appear to have been pleased with him, and he took his place forthwith at Court, where he acted as a species of unofficial poet-laureate, preparing masks, songs and dramatic interludes. His duties seem to have included the licensing of plays. For this he enjoyed a "fair salary," and was the Queen's "servant in ordinary." He speaks of the repose which this permanent patronage afforded him:

I who, by that most blessed hand sustained  
In quietness, do eat the bread of rest.

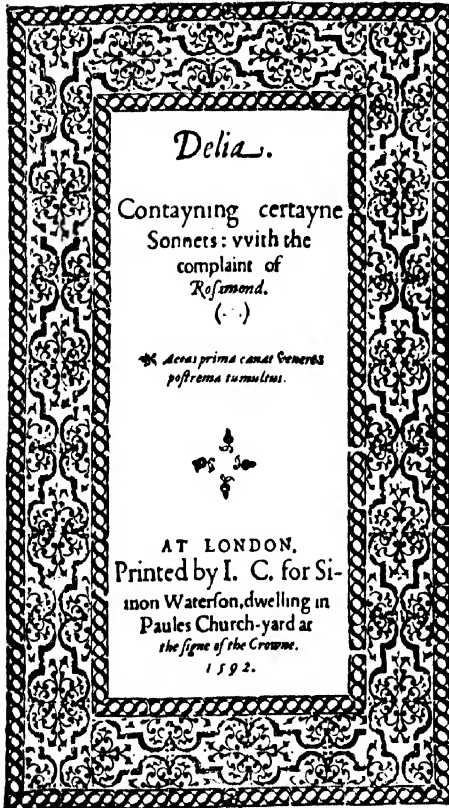
He held his theatrical censorship from 1603 until 1618. As the years progressed, a certain sluggishness of temperament, which had always, perhaps, been characteristic of him, became more marked. He "would be hid at his garden-

house in Old Street, near London, for some months together, as the tortoise busieth himself all the winter in the ground." This was with the purpose of devoting himself more completely to his work, which gradually grew to be almost wholly historical. His great *History of England* was brought to the death of Stephen in 1612 and to that of Edward III. in 1617; he then resigned it into the hands of John Trussell, of Winchester. More and more averse to society, Daniel "turned husbandman," and rented a farm at Beckington, in his native county of Somerset,

where he died in October 1619; his former pupil, Anne Clifford, now Countess Dowager of Pembroke and Montgomery, raised a monument to him in the church of Beckington. The fame of Daniel, long obscured, was revived at the Romantic Revival. Wordsworth, Southey, Hazlitt, and Lamb competed to eulogise him, and Coleridge said: "Read Daniel—the admirable Daniel—in his *Civil Wars* and *Triumph of Hymen*. The style and language are just such as any very pure and manly writer of the present day (Wordsworth, for example) would use; it seems quite modern in comparison with the style of Shakespeare."

How simple the narrative manner of Daniel was may be exemplified by stanzas taken almost at random from the *Civil Wars*:

And, Memory, preservess of things  
done,  
Come thou, unfold the wounds, the  
wrack, the waste;  
Reveal to me how all the strife  
began  
'Twixt Lancaster and York in ages  
past;  
How causes, counsels, and events did  
run



Title-page of the earliest edition of Samuel Daniel's  
"Delia," 1592

So long as these unhappy times did last;  
Unintermixt with fiction's fantasies.  
I versify the truth, not poetise.

And to the end we may with better ease  
Discern the true discourse, vouchsafe to show  
What were the times foregoing near to these,  
That these we may with better profit know;  
Tell how the world fell into this disease,  
And how so great distemperature did grow,  
So shall we see by what degrees it came,  
How things, at full, do soon wax out of frame.

For kings had, from the Norman conqueror, reigned  
With intermixt and variable fate,

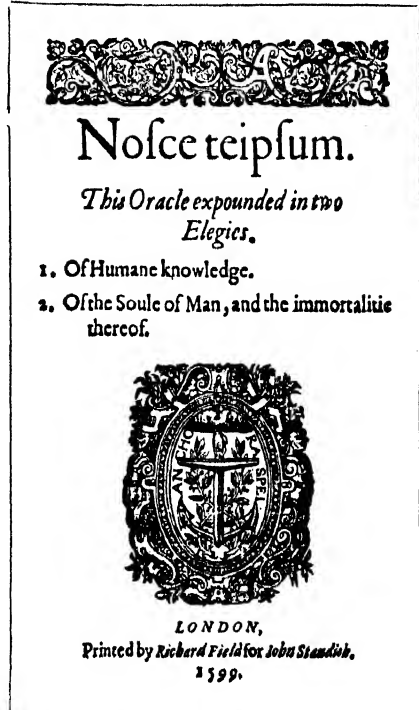
When England to her greatest height attained  
 Of power, dominion, glory, wealth, and state ;  
 After it had, with much ado, sustained  
 The violence of princes, with debate  
 For titles, and the often mutinies  
 Of nobles for their ancient liberties.

The tendency of Daniel was against the picturesque and romantic, and towards the civilised and modern in literary taste. In this respect he occupies a remarkable position as dimly foreshadowing the eighteenth century, and exemplifying that instinct for rigid propriety of diction of which we find scarcely a trace in English literature before him. Daniel was a philosophical realist, and he dared to gird even at Spenser for his romance, saying, in the course of his *Delia* :

Let others sing of knights and paladines,  
 In aged accents and untimely words,  
 Paint shadows in imaginary lines  
 Which well the reach of their high  
 wits records.

Such adventures in language and in art were unwelcome to the "sober-minded Daniel."

Whether Sir JOHN DAVYS (or DAVIS) (1569-1626) joined in the otherwise universal laudation of Daniel's early poems is uncertain. If, as is supposed, Davys satirised his contemporary under the name of Dacus, he put his finger with great emphasis on Daniel's radical fault, the prosiness of his poetry. To the witchery of the sonnet-cycles, too, Davys was recalcitrant, circulating in MS. a series of *Gulling Sonnets*, which were impertinent parodies of *Delia*. Nevertheless, the place of Davys in literary history is very close to that occupied by Daniel. He was the third son of John Davys of Tisbury, in Wilts, where he was christened on April 16, 1569. His father died when the poet was ten years of age, "and left him with his two brothers to his mother to be educated ; she therefore brought them all up to learning." John was sent to Winchester, and in 1585 to Queen's College, Oxford ; in 1587 he was admitted to the Middle Temple. Little is known about his early years, but in 1593 he had ready for the press his poem on dancing, called *Orchestra*, which appeared in 1596. In the preceding year Davys had become a barrister, but early in 1598 he was disbarred for cudgelling Richard Martin—afterwards Recorder of London, but then a young man of manners no less boisterous than his own—during dinner in Hall. Davys went back to Oxford in disgrace, and wrote his great philosophical poem, the *Nosce Teipsum*, which appeared in



Sir John  
 Davys

Title-page of Sir John Davys's  
 "Nosce Teipsum," 1599

1599. Queen Elizabeth was greatly pleased with this work, and in the same year Davys addressed to her his *Hymns to Astraea*. He was now in great favour, and in 1601 he sat for Corfe Castle in the Queen's last parliament. Davys was one of those selected to attend Lord Hunsdon in announcing to James VI. of Scotland his accession. When his name was announced in the presence, the literary King immediately asked "whether he were *Nosce Teipsum*," and on

learning that he was, "embraced him and conceived a considerable liking for him." His further favour was shown by Davys's appointment in November of the same year to be Solicitor-General for Ireland, when he was knighted. His career (save that in 1622 he collected his poems) was henceforth entirely dedicated to legal and political business, in which he displayed ability of a very high order. Charles I. was prepared to continue the favour which his father had shown to Davys, who was finally nominated to the post of Lord Chief Justice, the purple and ermine robes being actually purchased, but just before the date of his promotion he was found dead in his bed, on December 8, 1626. Davys enjoyed the reputation, both in Ireland and England, of being *iudex incorruptus et patronus fidus*. His daughter, having recently married Lord Hastings, be-



Michael Drayton

*After the portrait in the National Portrait Gallery*

came Lucy, Countess of Huntingdon. Of the poem on the *Immortality of the Soul*, which so deeply impressed Sir John Davys's generation, a fragment of quotation may suffice :

I know my body's of so frail a kind  
As force without, fevers within can kill ;  
I know the heavenly nature of my mind ;  
But 'tis corrupted both in wit and will.

I know my soul hath power to know all things,  
Yet is she blind and ignorant in all ;  
I know I am one of Nature's little kings,  
Yet to the least and vilest things am thrall.

I know my life's a pain and but a span,  
I know my sense is mocked with everything ;



And, to conclude, I know myself a MAN—  
Which is a proud, and yet a wretched thing.

Either Davys or Daniel might easily have given his talent all to prose. Their friend and companion, MICHAEL DRAYTON, was not a better poet, but he was much more persistently devoted to the cultivation of the art of verse, and regarded himself as absolutely consecrated to the Muses. During a life

*Michael  
Drayton*

more prolonged than that of most of his contemporaries, he never ceased to write — feverishly, crudely, copiously, very rarely giving to his work that polish which it needed to make it durable. Of his lyrical vocation there could be no doubt; yet, if Daniel and Davys were 'prose-men who wrote poetry, Drayton was a prosaic poet. His masterpiece of topographical ingenuity, the *Poly-Olbion*, a huge British gazetteer in broken-backed twelve-syllable verse, is a portent of misplaced energy. In his earlier historical pieces Drayton more closely resembles Daniel, whom, however, he exceeds in his lyrics as much as he limps behind him in his attempts at gnomic verse. Drayton writes like a man, and a few of his odes are still read with fervour; but his general compositions, in spite of all their variety, abundance, and accomplishment, fail to interest us; a prosy flatness spoils his most ambitious efforts. He helps us to comprehend the change which was to come in sixty years, and through Cowley he prophesies of Dryden. In his personal character and his attitude to literature, it is impossible not to be reminded by Drayton of Southey;

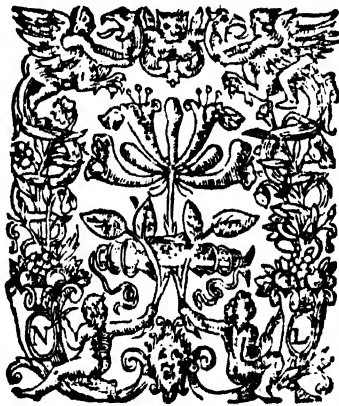
the Jacobean poet had the same confidence in his own powers, the same encyclopædic aims, the same fluency, hardness and manly strength, combined with a similar absence of charm. Unlike Southey, however, Drayton kept himself, through a long and busy life, almost exclusively to verse. His self-sufficiency was unshaken; his monument in Poets' Corner describes him as one who had but to "exchange his laurel for a crown of glory," and he describes himself, in *The Man in the Moon*, as a poet who had

By general voice, in times that then was, grown  
So excellent, that scarce there had been known  
Him that excell'd in piping or in song.

# POEMES. Lyrick and pastorall.

{ Odes,  
Eglogs,  
The man in the Moone.

By MICHAELL DRAYTON  
Esquier.



AT LONDON,  
Printed by R.B. for N.L. and J. Flaſket,

Title-page of Drayton's "Poemes," 1606

**Michael Drayton** (1563-1631) was born at Hartshill, in Warwickshire. At the age of ten, being already ambitious to be a poet, he is believed to have entered the family of the highly cultivated Sir Henry Goodyer, at Polesworth, as page. He became known to the Countess of Bedford and to Sir Walter Aston, who permanently befriended him. We know nothing of the details of his early life. Early in 1591 Drayton was preparing to publish his earliest volume, a



Title-page of Drayton's "Poly-Olbion," 1612

book of religious verse entitled *The Harmony of the Church*, when it was suppressed by the authorities, and one copy only has survived. In 1593 he published a volume of eclogues, entitled *Idea: The Shepherd's Garland*, in which he spoke of himself as Rowland, and described a love affair with a lady residing by the river Anker, in Warwickshire. This was further expanded in the sonnet-cycle of *Idea's Mirror* (1594). Drayton's publications now became very numerous. *Matilda* (1594), *Endimion and Phoebe* (1595?), *Mortimeriados*—afterwards revised as *The Barons' Wars*—(1596), and *England's Heroical Epistles*. Drayton's poetry, or else his person, was distasteful to King James, and when he laid his *Gratulatory Poem* at the feet of their arriving Majesties, the monarch, who had so graciously welcomed Daniel and Davys, rudely repulsed Drayton, whose work from this moment betrays a note of petulance and disap-

pointment. The royal disfavour, however, does not seem to have affected Drayton's popularity, which was very great. In 1605 he began to collect his poetical works, and they were reprinted with a frequency which proves them to have been welcome to the public. In 1606 appeared the *Poems Lyric and Pastoral*. Drayton was now occupied for many years by his masterpiece of antiquarian ingenuity, the famous *Poly-Olbion*, the first eighteen "songs" of which were issued, with maps, and with notes by Selden, in 1612; the remaining twelve "songs" being added in 1622. In 1627 Drayton issued a small folio volume comprising some of the most natural and delightful of his compositions, such as *The Battle of Agincourt*

## DRAYTON

(quite distinct from the ode of that name); *Nymphidia, or the Court of Faery*; *The Quest of Cynthia*; *The Shepherd's Sirena*; and *The Moon Calf*. His latest work was a rather grotesque collection of "nymphalls" or pastorals, called *The Muses' Elysium* (1630); this volume contained, however, some of the daintiest fairy poetry in the language. Drayton died in London on December 23, 1631, and was buried in Westminster Abbey. The following sonnet, which is the most perfect thing that Drayton wrote, was published in 1619:

Since there's no help, come let us kiss and part—  
 Nay, I have done, you get no more of me;  
 And I am glad, yea, glad with all my heart,  
 That thus so cleanly I myself can free.  
 Shake hands for ever, cancel all our vows,  
 And when we meet at any time again,  
 Be it not seen in either of our brows  
 That we one jot of former love retain.  
 Now at the last gasp of love's latest breath,  
 When, his pulse failing, passion speechless lies,  
 When faith is kneeling by his bed of death,  
 And innocence is closing up his eyes—  
 Now, if thou wouldst, when all have given him over,  
 From death to life thou mightst him yet recover.

From the very lively adventure of the fair Queen Mab on her visit to the fairy knight Pigwiggin, in *Nymphidia*, the following stanzas may be quoted as a favourable example of Drayton's easier vein:

She mounts her chariot with a trice,  
 Nor would she stay for no advice,  
 Until her maids, who were so nice,  
 To wait on her were fitted;  
 But ran herself away alone;  
 Which when they heard, there was not one  
 But hastened after to be gone,  
 As she had been dis-witted.

Hop and Mop and Drab so clear,  
 Pip and Trip and Skip, that were  
 Unto Mab, their sovereign dear,  
 Her special maids of honour;  
 Fib and Tib and Pink and Pin,  
 Tick and Quick and Jill and Jin,  
 Tit and Nit and Wap and Win—  
 The train that waited on her.

Upon a grasshopper they got,  
 And, what with amble and with trot,  
 For hedge or ditch they sparèd not,  
 But after her did hie them:  
 A cobweb over them they throw,  
 To shield the wind if it should blow;  
 Themselves they wisely could bestow  
 Lest any should espy them.

The closing years of the sixteenth century were marked by a curious attempt to introduce into English literature a school of satire founded on the imitation of Roman models. Narratives and diatribes directed against persons and institutions had, of course, always existed, and Spencer, in his *The Satiris*

*Mother Hubbard's Tale*, and Drayton in his *Owl* and his *Moon-Calf*, produced belated specimens of the mediæval satire of allegory. But as a species of social poetry closely modelled on the practice of Horace, Juvenal and Persius, satire was not comprehended in Europe until after the dissemination of Casaubon's criticism of the Latin poets. In English, the movement began in 1593, and it scarcely can be said to have survived 1599; it therefore belongs properly to the Elizabethan rather than to the Jacobean period. As, however, it was

principally cultivated by very young men, who became eminent for writings of a different character in later years, and as it possessed a tone eminently in contrast with the ideal and romantic colour of the earlier age, it is convenient to discuss it now.

The earliest of these Latin satires were those written, and widely circulated, but not printed, by Donne, who was twenty years of age when he composed the first three of his *Satires* in 1593. He was followed in composition, but preceded in publication, by Lodge, whose *Fig for Momus* belongs to 1595. Joseph Hall, whom we shall meet with again among the theologians, printed his books of *Virgidemiarum* in three instalments, in 1597-1599. Meanwhile Marston, the future dramatist, issued his satires, in two brochures, in 1598, and Edward Guilpin, of whom nothing more is known, his *Skialetheia* in the same year. These



Title-page of Drayton's "Owle," 1604

were the leaders among those who deliberately followed the model of Persius and Juvenal, and the result in the hands of these young poets of very various ultimate bias was curiously similar. These satires might almost be written by the same hand; it is difficult to distinguish a page of Marston from a page of Donne, or to decide at sight whether a certain passage is by Guilpin or by Hall. All of them cultivated a roughness which they supposed to be necessary in literature which should resemble "angry Juvenal" and "crabbed Persius." Hall said: "It is not for every one to relish a true and natural satire, being of itself both hard of conceit and harsh of style." This notion of satire, as of necessity obscure and elliptical, violent and "tart," lasted until Milton, with his superior scholarship, exposed it. The group of coarse,

fuscous poems, however, contains some very picturesque writing, and preserves for us a gallery of grotesque contemporary portraits. There is an example of Joseph Hall's rude irony :

O the fond boasting of vain-glorious man !  
Does he the best that may the best be seen ?  
Who ever gives a pair of velvet shoes  
To the Holy Rood, or liberally allows  
But a new rope to ring the curfew-bell,  
But he desires that his great deed may dwell  
Or graven in the chancel-window glass,  
Or in a lasting tomb of plated brass ?

Marston is often still more angry and more incoherent, and has not the same accent of sincerity :

Ay, Philo, ay ! I'll keep an open hall,  
A common, and a sumptuous festival :  
Welcome all eyes, all eyes, all tongues to me ;  
Gnaw, peasants, on my scraps of poesy !  
Castalios, Cyprions, court-boys, Spanish blocks,  
Ribbanded cars, granado-netherstocks,  
Fiddlers and scriveners, pedlers, tinkering knaves,  
Base blue-coats, tapsters, broad-cloth-minded slaves,  
Welcome, i' faith, but may you ne'er depart  
Till I have made your galléd hides to smart.

This would require a long commentary completely to explain its allusions, although it is one of Marston's less obscure passages. The darkness of allusion and crabbedness of style were intentional ; they were carried even further by Donne, of whom, however, it has to be said that while the satires of Hall were general invectives, and those of Marston and his group mainly fantastic libels against individuals, those of Donne were a series of humorous and sardonic portraits of types. This fact, and the eccentric violence of the poet's wilful versification, are exemplified in this picture of a walk in London streets with a young man of fashion :

Now leaps he upright, jogs me, and cries, " Do you see  
Yonder well-favoured youth ? " " Which ? " " O, 'tis he  
That dances so divinely." " O," said I,  
" Stand still ! Must you dance here for company ? "  
He droop'd ; we went, till one, which did excel  
Th' Indians in drinking his tobacco well,  
Met us. They talk'd. I whispered, " Let us go,  
It may be you smell him not ? Truly, I do ! "  
He hears not me, but, on the other side  
A many-coloured peacock having spied,  
Leaves him and me. I for my lost sheep stay ;  
He follows, overtakes, goes on the way.

With the writings of those satirists must be connected a work which, though *Parnassus* in dialogue, has no real dramatic character. This is the curious trilogy of *Parnassus*, a satirical review of the condition of English poetry at the close of the sixteenth century, which provided Cambridge students with entertainment on successive Christmas Days. The third of these plays was printed, as *The Return from Parnassus*, in 1606 ; the other two were preserved



Title-page of John Dowland's "Booke of Songs," 1597

among Hearne's MSS. in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, and first printed by Mr. W. D. Macray in 1886. The anonymous author, who was possibly John Day, seems to have been a Cheshire man. A certain Furor Poeticus is introduced

to ridicule and parody the extravagance of writers like Kyd, and the ranting Marstons and Tourneurs of a later generation. The *Parnassus* is not only valuable for its insight into University life, but it contains outspoken criticisms, from the scholar's point of view, of most of the poets of the time. The great actors, Burbage and Kempe, are introduced on the stage, and the latter gives an amusing professional opinion on the pieces which were being submitted to him for acting:

Few of the University [he says] pen plays well. They smell too much of that writer Ovid, and that writer Metamorphosis, and talk too much of Proserpina and Jupiter. Why, here's our fellow Shakespeare puts them all down, ay, and Ben Jonson too. O, that Ben Jonson is a petulant fellow! He brought up Horace giving the poets a pill, but our fellow Shakespeare hath given him a purge that made him bewray his credit.

The reformation, or rather creation, of English song at the close of the reign of Elizabeth has been referred to in an earlier chapter. But its causes and the strange abruptness with which it came into full development remain imperfectly examined. What had caused it? No doubt the general efflorescence of feeling, the new enlightenment, the new passion of life, took this mode of expressing themselves, as they took others in other departments of intellectual behaviour. But this particular manifestation of tuneful, flowery fancy seems to have been connected with two artistic tendencies, the one the cultivation of music, the other the study of recent French verse. The former is the more easy to follow. The year 1588 had been the occasion of a sudden outburst of musical talent in this country; it is, approximately, the date of public recognition of the exquisite talent of Tallis, Bird, and Dowland, and the foundation of their school of national lute-melody. This species of chamber-music instantly became the fashion, and remained so for at least some quarter of a century. It was necessary to find words for these airs, and the poems so employed were obliged to be lucid, liquid, brief, and of a temper suited to the gaiety or sadness of the instrument. The demand created the supply, and from having been heavy and dissonant to a painful degree, English lyrics suddenly took a perfect art and sweetness. What is very strange is that there was no transition. As soon as a composer wanted a trill of pure song, such as a blackcap or a whitethroat might have supplied, anonymous bards, without the smallest training, were able to gush forth with—

*The Song  
Writers*

O Love, they wrong thee much  
That say thy sweet is bitter,  
When thy rich fruit is such  
As nothing can be sweeter.  
Fair house of joy and bliss,  
Where truest pleasure is,  
I do adore thee;  
I know thee what thou art,  
I serve thee with my heart,  
And fall before thee.

(a little miracle which we owe to Mr. Bullen's researches); or, in a still lighter key, with—

Now is the month of maying,  
 When merry lads are playing,  
 Each with his bonny lass,  
 Upon the greeny grass,  
 The Spring, clad all in gladness,  
 Doth laugh at Winter's sadness,  
 And to the bagpipe's sound  
 The nymphs tread out their ground.

This joyous semi-classical gusto in life, this ecstasy in physical beauty and frank pleasure, recalls the lyrical poetry of France in the beginning of the sixteenth century, and the influence of the *Pléiade* on the song-writers and sonneteers of the Elizabethan and Jacobean ages is not questionable. It is, however, very difficult to trace this with exactitude. The spirit of Ronsard and of Remy Belleau, and something intangible of their very style, are discerned in Barnes and Drummond, but it would be dangerous to insist on this. A less important French writer, however, Philippe Desportes, enjoyed, as we know, a great popularity in England. Lodge says of him that he was "ordinarily in every man's hands," and direct paraphrases of the amatory and of the religious verse of Desportes are frequent.

The trick of this light and brilliant sensuous verse once learned, it took forms the most various and the most delightful. In the hands of the best poets it rapidly developed from an extreme naiveté and artless jiggling freedom to the fullest splendour of song. When Lodge, in 1590, could write—

Like to the clear in highest sphere,  
 Where all imperial beauty shines,  
 Of self-same colour is her hair,  
 Whether unfolded or in twines;  
 Heigh ho, fair Rosaline!  
 Her eyes are sapphires set in snow,  
 Refining heaven by every wink;  
 The gods do fear whenas they glow,  
 And I do tremble, when I think,  
 Heigh ho, would she were mine!

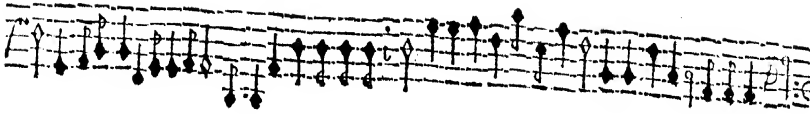
there was no technical lesson left for the English lyric to learn. But the old simplicity remained awhile side by side with this gorgeous and sonorous art, and to the combination we owe the songs of Shakespeare and THOMAS CAMPION, the pastorals of NICHOLAS BRETON, the marvellous short flights of verbal melody that star the music-books down to 1615 and even later. But then the flowers of English lyric began to wither, and the jewels took their place; a harder, less lucid, less spontaneous method of song-writing succeeded.

Of the early life of **Thomas Campion** (*d.* 1620) we know nothing, except that he was educated at Cambridge and was probably a member of Gray's Inn. In 1591 a wonderful lyric, containing the stanzas:

In myrtle arbours on the downs,  
 The fairy-queen Proserpina,  
 This night by moonshine leading merry rounds,  
 Holds a watch with sweet love  
 Down the dale, up the hill;  
 No plaints or groans may move  
 Their holy vigil.

*Thomas  
 Campion*

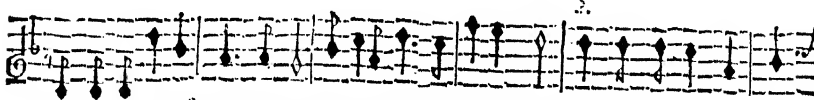




## VI.



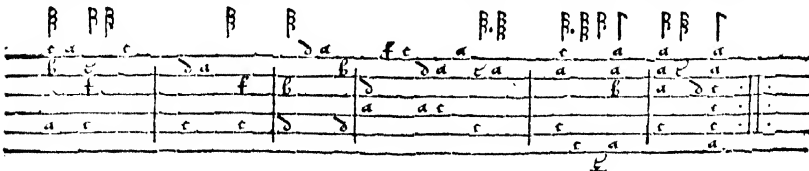
Hen to her lute Corrina sings, her voice reuiues the loa- den strings,



and doth in highest noates appeare as any challeng'd echo cleere, but when she doth of mour-



ning speake, eu'n with her sighes her sighes, ii. the strings do breake the strings do breake.



And as her lute doth liue or die,  
Led by her passion, so must I,  
For when of pleasure she doth sing,  
My thoughts enjoy a sodaine spring,  
But if she doth of sorrow speake,  
Eu'n from my hart the strings doe breake.

C 2

All you that will hold watch with love,  
 The fairy-queen Proserpina  
 Will make you fairer than Dione's dove,  
 Roses red, lilies white,,  
 And the clear damask hue  
 Shall on your cheeks unite  
 Love will adorn you,

appeared anonymously in an appendix to the *Astrophel and Stella* of Sidney. This was a very characteristic specimen of Campion's writing, who in 1595 published a volume of Latin *Poemata*, in which the author's preoccupation with the art of music is betrayed. The poet, however, had before this become a physician, and seems to have practised with success. His songs were published in successive *Books of Aires*, the first of which appeared in 1601, with the music, which was composed by the author himself and by Philip Rossiter the lutenist. Campion was a theorist on prosody, and in 1602 published prose *Observations on the Art of English Poesy*, in which he attacked "the vulgar and unartificial (*i.e.*, inartistic) custom of rhyming." Daniel and Ben Jonson wrote replies to this pamphlet. Later, Campion began to compose masques, and became second only to Jonson in this delicate exercise. That entitled *The Lords' Masque* (1613) contains the following song, to which the stars, summoned by Prometheus and Orpheus, "moved in an exceeding strange and delightful manner" in response to a neat mechanical artifice of Inigo Jones

Advance your choral motions now,  
 You music-loving lights,  
 This night concludes the nuptial vow—  
 Make this the best of nights  
 So bravely crown it with your beams  
 That it may live in fame  
 As long as Rhenus or as Thames  
 Are known by either name  
 Once more again, yet nearer move  
 Your forms at willing view,  
 Such fair effects of joy and love  
 None can express but you  
 Then revel midst your airy bowers  
 Till all the clouds do sweat,  
 That pleasure may be poured in showers  
 On this triumphant seat  
 Long since hath lovely Flora thrown  
 Her flowers and garlands here  
 Rich Ceres all her wealth hath shown,  
 Proud of her dainty cheer  
 Changed, then, to human shape, descend,  
 Clad in familiar weed,  
 That every eye may here commend  
 The kind delights you breed

Mr Bullen believes that Campion wrote the *Entertainment at Brougham Castle* of 1618. He was now near the end of his career, for he died in London, probably of the plague, on March 1, 1620, and was buried the same day at St. Dunstan's-in-the-West. Campion was almost unknown, until, in 1887, Mr. Bullen revealed

to us the beauties of one of the most admirable song-writers of his age ; the same historian has edited the works of Campion in 1889, and again in 1903.

**Nicholas Breton** (1542 ? - 1626 ? ) was the son of William Breton, a London tradesman, connected with a good Essex family, and claiming the title of "gentleman." He was educated at Oriel College, Oxford ; his father died early, and his mother married again, making the poet George Gascoigne her son's stepfather. As early as 1577 Breton began to publish, and he was the author of more than fifty separate collections of prose and verse, many of which are lost. Breton was in the service of Sir Philip Sidney until his death, and then in that of the Countess of Pembroke. He appears to have grievously offended her, and to have fallen in consequence into miserable indigence, "going up and down like a shadow without substance, a purse without money, and a body without spirit." About the year 1601, however, she seems to have forgiven him, and he went on writing serenely until 1626, the year of the publication of his *Fantastics*, when he disappears. His artless, diffuse, and easy grace in lyric pastoral is seen at its best in *The Passionate Shepherd* of 1604, and in such songs as :

Good Muse, rock me asleep  
With some sweet harmony ;  
This weary eye is not to keep  
Thy wary company.

Sweet Love, be gone awhile !  
Thou knowest my heaviness ;  
Beauty is born but to beguile  
My heart of happiness.

See how my little flock,  
That loved to feed on high,  
Do tumble headlong down the rock,  
And in the valley die.

The bushes and the trees,  
That were so fresh and green,  
Do all their dainty colour leese [lose],  
And not a leaf is seen.

The blackbird and the thrush,  
That made the woods to ring,  
With all the rest, are now at hush,  
And not a note they sing.

The publication of the *Faery Queene*, with its languid passion and voluptuous romance, produced a very vivid influence on the minds of several young poets, who received the stamp of Spenser's genius in their adolescence, and did

*The School  
of Spenser*

THE  
WILL OF WIT,  
Wits Will, or Wils  
VVhichuse you whether.

Containing five discourses,  
the effects whereof follow.

Read and iudge.

Compiled by Nicholas Breton  
Gentleman.

Nemba, Che men /a



LONDON  
Printed by Thomas Creede,  
1599.

Title-page of Nicholas Breton's "The Will of Wit," 1599

not lose it in their advancing years. The great charm of the stanza which Spenser had invited,—“a measure,” as Shelley said long afterwards, “inexpressibly beautiful,” fascinated several of these youthful poets, but, with the metrical restlessness of the age, none of them were content to accept it as Spenser had left it, in the brilliancy and magnificence of its perfection. They introduced modifications of it, leaving out one line (as Giles Fletcher and

## A Murmurer.



LONDON  
Printed by ROBERT RAYVORTH, and  
are to be sold by John Wright, at his  
shop neere Christ-Church  
gate. 1607.

Title-page of Nicholas Breton's  
“A Murmur.” 1607

the author of *Britain's Ida*), or the two central lines of the stanza (as in *The Purple Island*); or, while retaining the nine lines, slightly rearranging the rhymes (as Phineas Fletcher in the *Piscatory Eclogues*). These alterations, however, left Spenser's noble stanza,—the Chaucerian narrative stanza enlarged by an alexandrine,—the aim and model of their style. With this, all these poets endeavoured to reproduce, without direct imitation but in harmony with their individual talent, the sumptuousness and magic of their model. Their sense of beauty, however, was in no case so pure as it had been in Spenser, and these interesting writers display the tendency towards decay which was already, early in the reign of James I., threatening to invade English poetry. They are uplifted in imagination, but their fancy takes shorter and abrupt flights, and they are easily diverted by what is extravagant and preposterous. Their love for what is comely and noble raises them often to genuine heights, from

which they suddenly descend into tastelessness.

In this group of disciples of Spenser, the predominant talent is that of GILES FLETCHER, to whom, indeed, the rarer quality of genius can scarcely be denied. He was the author of the finest religious poem produced in England between the *Vision of Piers Plowman* and *Paradise Lost*. In several passages of his fourfold *Christ's Victory and Triumph*, Giles Fletcher solved the difficult problem of how to be at once gorgeous and yet simple, majestic and yet touching. At his apogee he surpasses his very master, for his imagination lifts him to a spiritual sublimity. In the beatific vision in his fourth canto we are reminded of no lesser poem than the *Paradiso*

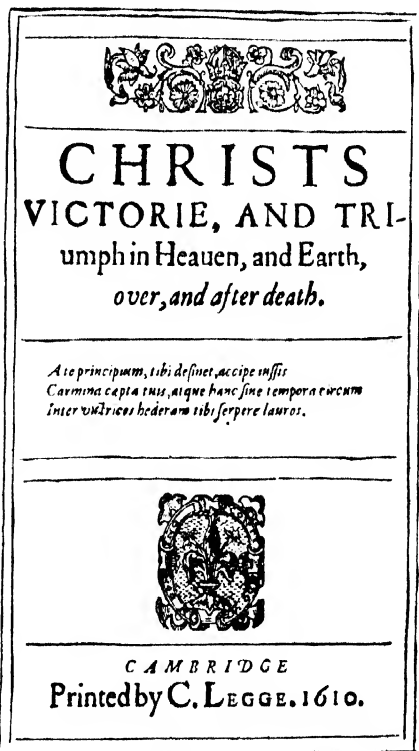
Toss up your heads, ye everlasting gates,  
And let the Prince of Glory enter in!  
At whose brave volley of siderial states  
The sun to blush and stars grow pale were seen,  
When leaping first from Earth he did begin

To climb his angel's wings. Then, open hang  
Your crystal doors! so, all the chorus sang  
Of heavenly birds, as to the stars they nimbly sprang.

Hark! how the floods clap their applauding hands;  
The pleasant valleys singing for delight;  
The wanton mountains dance about the lands,  
The while the fields, struck with the heavenly light,  
Set all their flowers a-smiling at the sight;  
The trees laugh with their blossoms, and the sound  
Of the triumphant shout of praise that crowned  
The flaming Lamb, breaking through Heaven, hath passage found.

Out leap the antique patriarchs, all in  
haste,  
To see the powers of Hell in triumph  
led,  
And with small stars a garland inter-  
chased  
Of olive-leaves they love, to crown  
His head,  
That was before with thorns dis-  
gloried:  
After them flew the prophets, brightly  
stoled  
In shining lawn, and wimpled manifold,  
Striking their ivory harps, strung all  
in chords of gold.

To which the saints victorious carols  
sung,  
Ten thousand saints at once; that  
with the sound  
The hollow vault of heaven for triumph  
rung;  
The cherubim their clamours did con-  
found  
With all the rest, and clapped their  
wings around;  
Down from their thrones the domina-  
tions flow,  
And at His feet their crowns and  
sceptres throw,  
And all the princely souls fell on  
their faces low.



Title-page of Giles Fletcher's  
"Christ's Victorie," 1610

The sonorous purity and elevation of Giles Fletcher at his best give more than a hint of the approaching Milton, who was himself to belong, in his early youth and particularly in his odes, to the group of Spenserians. In *Christ's Victory and Triumph* we find the widely popular Spenserian tradition at its highest. It is right to say that these splendours are not sustained, and that Giles Fletcher is often florid and sometimes merely trivial. PHINEAS FLETCHER is still more open to censure in matter of taste, and although in his way a genuine poet, never rises to his brother's white heat of imagination. His famous *Purple Island* is really a work of the decadence, and, although vivacious, varied and marvellously ingenious, is a hopeless attempt to embroider

with beautiful language and fantastic images a theme—the physiology of the human body—which is radically grotesque and arid as a subject for poetry. Another Spenserian of looser and more languid talent was WILLIAM BROWNE, who adopted a fluid pastoral sweetness and wrote mainly in the heroic couplet. He is most to be valued for his occasional felicities, his happy vignettes of country life, his touches of landscape. But his unfinished masterpiece, *Britannia's Pastorals*, is incoherent, and sometimes mawkish.

The Fletchers were a family largely endowed with literary talent. Richard Fletcher, of Cranbrook, had two sons, each of whom became eminent. Of these one was Richard (*d* 1596), who was Mary Queen of Scots' chaplain at Fotheringay, and who died Bishop of London; his son was John Fletcher, the famous playwright. The brother of the bishop was Giles Fletcher the elder (1549-1611), who went as envoy to Russia, printed a dangerous and able book on that country in 1591, and appeared in 1593 among the sonnet-writers as the author of a cycle entitled *Licia*. He married Joan Sheafe, and their two sons were the leaders of the Spenserian school. The elder, **Phineas Fletcher** (1582-1650), was born at Cranbrook on April 8, 1582, was educated at Eton, and became a scholar of King's College, Cambridge, in 1600. He resided at the University for sixteen years, having been elected a fellow of his college. After acting as chaplain in the Willoughby household for some time, Phineas Fletcher settled down in Norfolk for the rest of his life as Rector of Hilgay, where he died towards the close of 1650. It is unexplained why he did not publish his poems, which bear the impress of youth, until late in life. But his earliest publication, the *Locustæ*, belongs to 1627, and the *Suehdes* to 1631. Finally, his important works, *The Purple Island* and the *Piscatory Eclogues*, were delayed until 1633. An idea of the forms by which Phineas is principally known may be given by a stanza from each of these writings. The following exemplifies the *Piscatory Eclogues*.

A fisher-boy that never knew his peer  
In dainty songs, the gentle Thomaſin,  
With folded arms, deep sighs and heavy cheer,  
Where hundred nymphs, and hundred muses inn,  
Sank down by Camus' brinks, with him his dear  
Thyrſil lay, oft-times would he begin  
To his grief, and better way advise,  
But still his words, when his sad friend he spies,  
Forsook his silent tongue, to speak in watery eyes

While this is the stanza in which *The Purple Island* is composed.

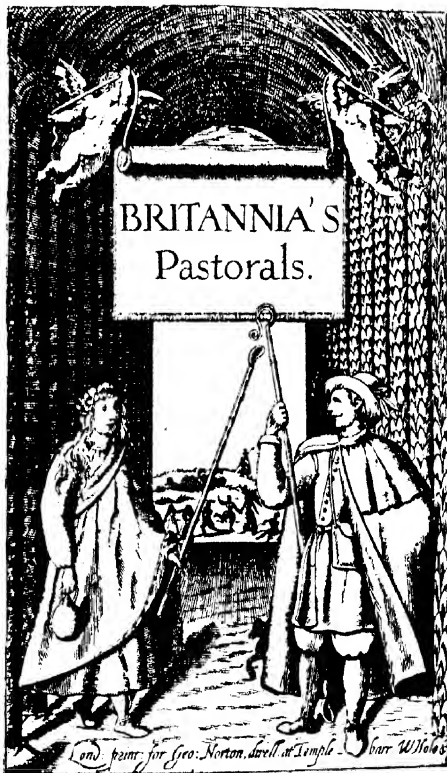
The morning fresh, dappling her horse with roses,  
Vexed at the lingering shades, that long had left her  
In Tithon's freezing arms, the light discloses,  
And, chasing night, of rule and harm bereft her,  
The sun with gentle beams his rage disguises,  
And, like aspiring tyrants, temporises,  
Never to be endured, but when he falls or rises

**Giles Fletcher**, the younger (1584?-1623?), was the brother of Phineas, and was probably born in London not later than 1584. He was sent early to Westminster School, and thence in 1605 to Trinity College, Cambridge, by the generous kindness of the famous Dr. Thomas Neville, who was Master of that

college from 1593-1615. His earliest verses, which are of a rare maturity, and display already the stanzaic adaptation of the Spenserian form which Giles Fletcher was afterwards to make prominent, appeared in 1603 in a collection called *Sorrow's Joy*, of poems on the death of Queen Elizabeth. In this "canto" the youthful poet gives remarkable promise, as a single specimen may serve to show :

So let the loathèd lapwing, when her nest  
Is stolen away, not as she uses, fly,  
Cozening the searcher of his promised feast,  
But, widowed of all hope, still "Itys" cry,  
And naught but "Itys, Itys!" till she die.  
Say, sweetest quirester of the airy quire,  
Doth not thy "Tereu, Tereu!" then expire,  
When winter robs thy house of all her green attire?

At Trinity College, where Giles Fletcher became a bachelor of divinity, he was famous for being "equally beloved of the Muses and the Graces." In 1610 he published the poem on which his fame rests, *Christ's Victory and Triumph in Heaven and Earth*; in spite of its transcendent beauties, it was coldly received, and was the object of "malicious tongues." But at least Milton read it. Fletcher, however, was discouraged, and about 1617 he exchanged his living in Cambridge for the rectory of Alderton, in Suffolk, where his "clownish and low-parted parishioners valued not their pastor according to his worth." Their stubbornness "disposed him to melancholy and hastened his dissolution." He issued no more verse, but a prose treatise of divinity, *The Reward of the Faithful*, in 1623. This dim record of the life of Giles Fletcher leaves upon us the impression of a man whose powers were early paralysed by the inexplicable neglect of his contemporaries.



Title-page of "Britannia's Pastorals," 1613

**William Browne** (1591? -1643) was born at Tavistock, and is believed to have belonged to an old Devonshire family, the Brownes of Browne-Illash. He was educated at Exeter College, Oxford, but left the University without a degree, entering Clifford's Inn, in London, as a law student. Thence he went over to the Inner Temple in the winter of 1611. In 1613 appeared the First Book of *Britannia's Pastorals*, a work in which the talent of a very young man is displayed in its crude exuberance. In 1614 Browne issued the collection of eclogues called

*The Shepherd's Pipe*, and in 1616 a Second Book of *Britannia's Pastorals*, dedicated to William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, into whose service he had now entered. Anthony à Wood says that he settled at Wilton, where "he got wealth and purchased an estate," but this is doubtful. A William Browne, who may be the poet, was buried at Tavistock on March 27, 1643: but the widow of the latter did not obtain administration of his estate at Dorking until 1645. Browne was small in stature, and a favourite with his friends, among whom were Drayton and Selden. One of his most agreeable works, the *Inner Temple Masque*, remained in MS. until

1772, and a Third Book of *Britannia's Pastorals* until 1852. The following exquisite epitaph, first printed in 1658, and long attributed to Ben Jonson, is now known to be the work of Browne:

ON THE COUNTESS DOWAGER  
OF PEMBROKE

Underneath this sable hearse  
Lies the subject of all verse:  
Sidney's sister, Pembroke's  
mother:  
Death, ere thou hast slain  
another,  
Fair and learn'd and good as  
she,  
Time shall throw a dart at  
thee.

It is difficult to find an appropriate place in our record for GEORGE WITHER, whose figure is very prominent from the reign of Elizabeth to that of Charles II., but so protean are its inconsistencies, and so violently various, that it belongs to a succession of



George  
Wither

George Wither

From the portrait by John Payne in the "Emblemes" 1634

periods rather than to any one. For convenience, however, we may consider the poems of Wither in succession to those of the disciples of Spenser, with whom he preserved close relations for some time. At his best Wither is a lyric poet of very remarkable freshness, brightness and charm; at his worst he is a poetaster pouring forth absolute trash. In no writer in our literature do we meet with such violent extremes of merit, and Wither appears to have been devoid, not indeed of genius, but of the rudiments of a controlling taste. Moreover, during his long life he showed himself sensitive without intelligence to the trend of popular feeling, so that when the public demanded airy and exquisite pastoral songs, about 1610, Wither could pro-



duce them ; and when, after the Restoration, all sense of style and dignity was lost in popular verse, Wither could, with absolute complacency, publish doggerel such as his *Tuba Pacifica* and his *Sighs for the Pitchers*. His life was so long, his works so extremely numerous and their value so irregular, that the best critical opinion has always separated the chaff from the grain before beginning to estimate Wither's value. This being done, he appears as the author, between 1612 and 1630, of a number of little books of verse, containing eclogues, songs and epistles of great picturesqueness, occasionally rising into really eminent beauty. In this mood, Wither knows that

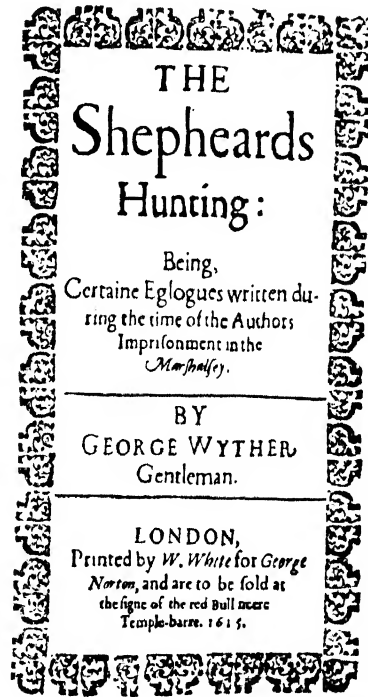
... though all the world's delight forsake  
me,  
I have a Muse, and she shall music make  
me :

Whose very notes, in spite of closest cages,  
Shall give content to me and after ages.

But the irregularity of his inspiration is remarkable even in his earliest works, where, as has been said, the purple passages are often stitched into a ground of the coarsest sacking. The faults of Wither were repeated by FRANCIS QUARLES, the extremely popular writer of scriptural paraphrases, epitaphs and emblems, in whom the prosaic qualities of the seventeenth century first appear in their open and pronounced form. Slovenly and tasteless as Quarles was, he had nevertheless a vigour and homely wit, which should save him from absolute ridicule. His ardour did not always betray him

into the grotesque, and he is occasionally dignified as well as spirited. The majority of his writings, however, are disfigured by the most preposterous faults of style, and awaken something like bewilderment in a reader who recollects that they were written by a man who was born before Spenser died.

**George Wither** (1588-1667) was born at Bentworth, in Hampshire, on June 11, 1588. His parents, who were in easy circumstances, sent him to the village school of Colemore, and then to Magdalen College, Oxford. He went back to Bentworth, and, whatever that may mean, "to the plough." But about 1612 he went up to London, and began to devote himself to literature, and in 1613 was imprisoned in the Marshalsea for printing his satire called *Abuses Stript and Whipt*. While in prison he wrote *The Shepherd's Hunting* and *Fidelia*, two of his most successful works, each published in 1615. *The Mistress of Philæte*



Title-page of Wither's "Shepheards Hunting," 1615

belongs to the same period, but was not printed until 1622. In this poem occurs the description of the poet's Hampshire home, and in particular of Alresford Pool :



George Wither

*After the portrait by W. Holl*

Two pretty rills do meet, and  
meeting make  
Within one valley a large silver  
lake ;  
About whose banks the fertile  
mountains stood  
In ages passèd, bravely crowned  
with wood ;  
Which, lending cold, sweet  
shadows, gave it grace  
To be accounted Cynthia's  
bathing-place ;  
And from her father Neptune's  
brackish court  
Fair Thetis thither often would  
resort,  
Attended by the fishes of the  
sea,  
Which in these sweeter waters  
come to play.  
There would the Daughter of  
the Sea-god dive ;  
And thither came the land-  
nymphs, every eve,  
To wait upon her, bringing for  
her brows  
Rich garlands of sweet flowers  
and beechy boughs.  
For pleasant was that pool, and  
near it there  
Was neither rotten marsh nor  
boggy fen.  
It was not overgrown with  
boisterous sedge,  
Nor grew there rudely, than,  
along the edge,  
A bending willow nor a prickly  
bush,  
Nor broad-leaved flag, nor reed,  
nor knotty rush,  
But here, well-ordered, was a  
grove with bowers,

There, grassy plots set round about with flowers ;  
Here you might, through the water, see the land  
Appear, strewn o'er with white or yellow sand.  
Yon, deeper was it ; and the wind, by whiffs,  
Would make it rise, and wash the little cliffs ;  
On which, oft pluming, sate, unfrighted than,  
The gagging wild-geese and the snow-white swan,  
With all those flocks of fowls which, to this day,  
Upon those quiet waters breed and play.

At the breaking out of the Civil War, Wither's sympathies were originally on the side of the King, and he led a regiment of cavalry against the Scotch Covenanters.

But he was a Puritan by conviction, and in 1642 he definitely came over to the Parliamentary side, and was made Governor of Farnham Castle. His literary productions became more numerous than ever, but they consisted either of hymns and religious exercises or of violent political diatribes. He cultivated the extravagant nomenclature of the day, and the titles of his later pamphlets vary from *Opo-balsamum Anglicanum* to *Salt upon Salt*. His violence grew with years, and the Restoration deprived his temper of its last shred of self-control. He was imprisoned in Newgate for libel in 1660, and left there, as being out of harm's way, for several years. He was infinitely active with the pen, however, during this period, and published nine or ten volumes while he was in prison. He was released at last, and died obscurely in London, being close upon his eightieth year, on May 2, 1667.



Title-page of Wither's "Juvenilia," 1622



Francis Quarles  
From an engraving by Alais

Francis Quarles (1592-1644) was a gentleman of good family, born at the manor-house of Stewards, in Essex, in May 1592. He was early left an orphan, and was educated at Christ's College, Cambridge, afterwards entering Lincoln's Inn. When the Princess Elizabeth married the Palatine and proceeded to Germany in 1613, Quarles accompanied her as cup-bearer, and appears to have lived abroad in her service for several years. In 1620, however, he was back in London, and published *A Feast for Worms*, a metrical version of the book of Jonah. His publications now became exceedingly numerous, and among the most popular of them were *Sion's Sonnets* (1625), *Argalus and Parthenia* (1629),

and *Emblems* (1634-1635). It is not known at what date previous to 1629 Quarles became the private secretary to Archbishop Ussher in Ireland. He was appointed Chronologer to the city of London in 1639, and from the outbreak of the war to the end of his life was a fervent royalist. He defended Charles I. with such ardour that his MSS. were confiscated and burned and he himself was in much danger. His extreme popularity among Puritan readers, however, preserved Quarles

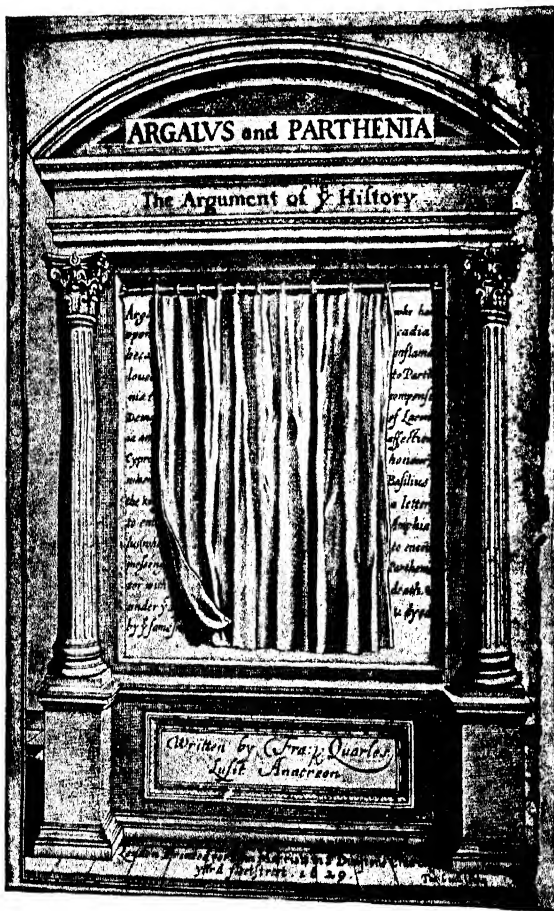
from personal attack, and he died in London before the struggle was decided on September 8, 1644, and was buried in the church of St. Olave, Silver Street. His solitary drama, the tragedy of *The Virgin Widow*, appeared posthumously in 1649. That homeliness of Quarles which so endeared him to his contemporaries may be exemplified by the following passage :

Even like the hawk, whose  
keeper's wary hands  
Have made a prisoner to  
her weathering stock,  
Forgetting quite the power of  
her fast bands,  
Makes a rank bate from her  
forsaken block,  
But her too-faithful leash  
doth soon restrain  
Her broken flight, at-  
tempted oft in vain ;  
It gives her loins a twitch, and  
tugs her back again.

So, when my soul directs her  
better eye  
To heaven's bright palace,  
where my treasure lies,  
I spread my willing wings, but  
cannot fly ;

Earth hauls me down ; I cannot, cannot rise ;  
When I but strive to mount the least degree,  
Earth gives a jerk, and foils me on my knee ;  
Lord ! how my soul is rackt betwixt the world and thee !

Great God, I spread my feeble wings in vain ;  
In vain I offer my extended hands -  
I cannot mount till thou unlink my chain ;  
I cannot come till thou release my bands,  
Which if Thou please to break, and then supply  
My wings with spirit, the eagle shall not fly  
A pitch that's half so fair nor half so swift as I.



Title-page of Quarles's "Argalus and Parthenia," 1629

Another isolated figure in the period we are now considering is **Fulke Greville**, afterwards the first Lord **Brooke** (1554-1628), who was a late survival from the chivalry of the early Elizabethan age. He had left his ancestral house of Beauchamp Court, in Warwickshire, at the age of ten, to enter Shrewsbury School, and had met a fellow pupil arriving on the same day, the young Philip Sidney. They were not divided in affection until Sidney died, although when the latter went to Oxford, Greville became a fellow commoner at Jesus College, Cambridge. The friends met again at the Court of Elizabeth, and there was added to their close confraternity another poet, Sir Edward Dyer, who was to die in 1607. The three were inseparable, and on one occasion when he had been for a moment divided from Dyer and Greville and was reunited to them, Sidney sang :

Welcome my two to me,  
The number best beloved ;  
Within my heart you be  
In friendship unremoved.  
Join hands and hearts, so let it be ;  
Make but one mind in bodies three.

Greville was the survivor of this romantic trinity. He adopted politics as a profession, and rose to high honours under Elizabeth, who greatly esteemed him. He was Secretary to the Principality of Wales for forty-five years, and in 1597 he was knighted. Fulke Greville rose to be Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1614, and was raised to the peerage, as Baron Brooke, in 1621. James I. gave him two magnificent and historic estates, Warwick Castle and Knoll Park. His end was mysterious ; he was stabbed in the back by a footman, in his bed-chamber while he was dressing, in September 1628 ; the



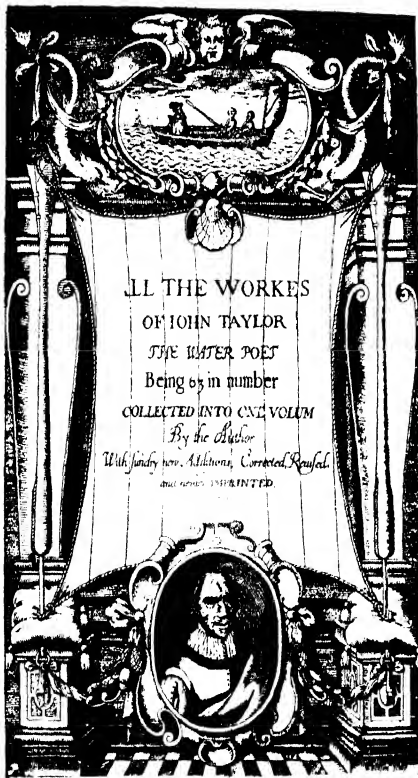
**Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke**

*After an original portrait*

murderer committed suicide before any explanation of his crime could be extracted from him. With the exception of a few verses in anthologies and the surreptitious edition of part of *Mustapha* in 1609, nothing of Lord Brooke's was published in his lifetime. It was not until 1633 that *Certain Learned and Elegant Works* appeared in folio ; this contained some philosophical " treatises " in verse, a cycle of sonnets entitled *Calica*, and the two tragedies of *Alaham* and *Mustapha*. In 1652 was published Fulke Greville's belated *Life of Sir Philip Sidney*, and more philosophical poems in 1670. The poetry of Lord Brooke is extremely abstruse and obscure, harsh in construction, with what a contemporary critic called " a close, mysterious, and sententious way of writing." As far as we can judge, the earliest, and certainly the simplest, of his writings which we possess are the sonnets. Lamb said that his plays were " frozen " ; they have rhyme introduced into them, and move slowly under a burden of ripe and solemn thought. But Brooke neglects

lucidity, melody, and colour more resolutely than any other English poet of his rank, and his poems were obviously written, in proud disdain of public taste, to please no one but himself. The ingenuity of Lord Brooke is exemplified at its best in this quatorzain from *Calica* :

Satan, no woman, yet a wandering spirit,  
 When he saw ships sail two ways with one wind,  
 Of sailors' trade he hell did disinherit—  
 The Devil himself loves not a half-fast mind.  
 The satyr, when he saw the shepherd blow  
 To warm his hands and make his pottage cool,  
 Manhood forswore and, half a beast, did know  
 Nature with double breath is put to school.  
 Cupid doth head his shafts in women's faces,  
 Where smiles and tears dwell ever near together,  
 Where all the arts of change give passion graces ;  
 While these clouds threaten, who fears not the weather ?  
 Sailors and satyrs, Cupid's knights, and I  
 Fear women that swear "Nay!" and know they lie.



Title-page of the *Works of the Water Poet*

A poetical oddity of much voluble talent was **John Taylor** (1580-1653), called "The Water Poet," because he was a Thames waterman by profession; he was patronised by Ben Jonson and by the Court, and arranged the aquatic pageants which was a picturesque feature of the age. In the course of his life, the Water Poet issued nearly one hundred and thirty separate publications. He was a sort of public jester, and in 1620 was received in that capacity by the Queen of Bohemia, who entertained him at Prague. Taylor collected his queer doggerel into his "Works" in 1630. A certain interest, not wholly literary, attaches also to the poetry of Master **Patrick Hannay**, who was drowned at sea about 1629. His books were collected in 1622.

But a poet was in the field who was to sweep the pleasant flowers of the disciples of Spenser before him as ruthlessly as a mower cuts down the daisies with his scythe. In this age of mighty wits and luminous imagina-

tions, the most robust and the most elaborately trained intellect was surely that of **JOHN DONNE**. Born as early as 1573, and associated with many of the purely Elizabethan poets, we have yet the habit of thinking of him as wholly Jacobean,

and the instinct is not an erroneous one, for he begins a new age. His poems were kept in manuscript until two years after his death in 1631, but they were widely circulated, and they exercised an extraordinary effect. Long before any edition of Donne was published, the majority of living English verse-writers had been influenced by the main peculiarities of his style. He wrote satires, epistles, elegies, sonnets, and lyrics, and although it is in the last mentioned that his beauties are most frequent, the essence of Donne, the strange personal characteristic which made him so unlike every one else, is redolent in all. He rejected whatever had pleased the Elizabethan age; he threw the fashionable humanism to the winds; he broke up the accepted prosody; he aimed at a totally new method in diction, in illustration, in attitude. He was a realist, who studded his writings with images drawn from contemporary life. For grace and mellifluous floridity he substituted audacity,

intensity, a proud and fulgurant darkness, as of an intellectual thunder-cloud. He thought to redeem poetry from triviality by a transcendental exercise of mental force, applied with violence to the most unpromising subjects, chosen sometimes merely because they were unpromising, in an insolent rejection of the traditions of plastic beauty. He conceived nothing



Title-page of Patrick Hannay's Poems, with portrait of the Author

less daring than a complete revolution of style, and the dethronement of the whole dynasty of modern verse, in favour of a new naturalism dependent solely on a blaze of intellect.

Unfortunately, the genius of Donne was not equal to his ambition and his force. He lacked the element needed to fuse his brilliant intuitions into a classical shape. He aimed at becoming a great creative reformer, but he succeeded only in disturbing and dislocating literature. He was the blind Samson in the Elizabethan gate, strong enough to pull the beautiful temple of Spenserian fancy about the ears of the worshippers, but powerless to offer them a

substitute. What he gave to poetry in exchange for what he destroyed was almost wholly deplorable. For sixty years the evil taint of Donne rested on us, and our tradition is not free from it yet. To him—almost to him alone—we owe the tortured irregularities, the monstrous pedantries, the alembicated verbiage of the decline. "Rhyme's sturdy cripple," as Coleridge called him, Donne is the father of all that is exasperating, affected, and "metaphysical" in English poetry. He represented, with Marino in Italy, Gongora in Spain, and Du Bartas and D'Aubigné in France, that mania for an inflamed and eccentric extravagance of fancy which was racing over Europe like a hideous new disease; and the ease and rapidity with which the infection was caught shows how ready



John Donne

*From a contemporary engraving by Lombart*

the world of letters was to succumb to such a plague. That Donne, in flashes, and especially in certain of his lyrics, is still able to afford us imaginative ecstasy of the very highest order—he has written a few single lines almost comparable with the best of Shakespeare's—must not blind us, in a general survey, to the maleficence of his genius. No one has injured English writing more than Donne, not even Carlyle.

**John Donne** (1573–1631) was born in the parish of St. Nicholas Olave, in the City. He was the eldest son of a citizen and ironmonger of London of the same name, who died early in 1576, and left three children to the charge of their mother, Elizabeth Heywood, who was of the family of the great Sir Thomas More, and the daughter of John Heywood, the epigrammatist and writer of interludes. On both sides the family of Donne was Catholic, and during his childhood, his uncles Elizaus (or Ellis) and Jasper Heywood, both men of literary attainments, were persecuted for their faith. Donne was so brilliantly precocious that it was said of him that "this age hath brought forth another Pico della Mirandola." In

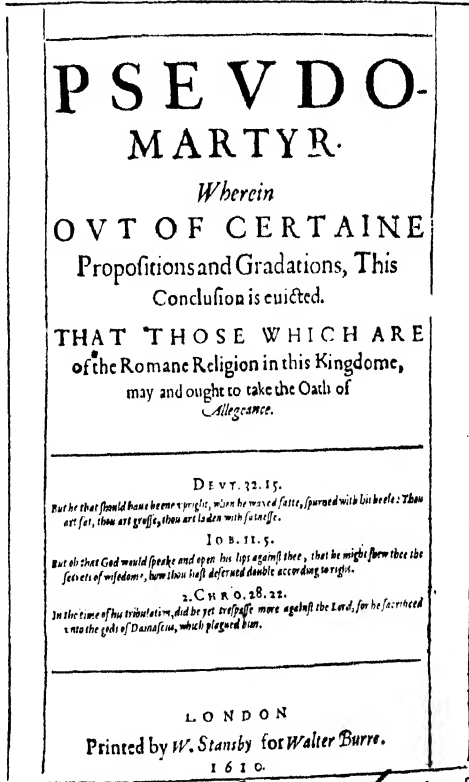


October 1584 he and his younger brother Henry were entered at Hart Hall, Oxford. By advice from his Roman friends, he forebore to take a degree, and left the University in 1587, being then only fourteen years of age. He proceeded to Cambridge, where he took his degree; in 1590 removed to London and entered Lincoln's Inn in May 1592. His brother, Henry Donne, was arrested in May 1593 for harbouring a proscribed Catholic priest, and died of fever in prison. When, therefore, Donne came of age in 1594 he had to divide the very considerable fortune which his father had left with his mother and his sister, now Mrs. Copley.

He now began to examine the basis of his faith, and gradually left the Church of Rome; he "betrotthed himself to no religion that might give him any other denomination than a Christian." He began to devote himself to poetry, and he made his maiden efforts in satire. The year 1593 is the date of his earliest exercises in this kind, of which some account has already been given. He did not publish anything at this time, and on June 1, 1599, the power of doing so was removed from him by an order from the Archbishop's court "that no Satires or Epigrams be printed hereafter." Donne engaged himself under the Earl of Essex for the Cadiz expedition in 1596 and that made to the Azores in 1597. His experiences in the latter are enshrined in two remarkable poems, *The Storm* and *The Calm*. Instead of returning from the Azores to England, Donne visited Spain and Italy, remaining "some years" in the South of Europe. There is here, perhaps, some exaggeration, for in the winter of 1597 Donne

was already settled in London, in York House, as private secretary to Sir Thomas Egerton (afterwards Lord Ellesmere), the Lord Keeper. It is probable that by this time, and during his years of wandering adventure, the greater part of Donne's lyrical poems had been composed. At the death of Lady Egerton, the Lord Keeper's niece, Anne More, came to conduct his household. She and Donne fell in love with one another, and at the close of 1601 they were secretly married. This business being disclosed, Sir George More, the father of the bride, demanded that Donne should be dismissed from his appointment and thrown into the Fleet Prison, where he lay for some weeks. He had recently

*de jure et major es con la hoga*



*Ex dono auctoris*

*Don. Warton*

Title-page of the "Pseudo-Martyr," 1610,  
with Donne's handwriting

completed a treatise in verse on the Pythagorean theory of metempsychosis, called *The Progress of the Soul*, which is one of the most brilliant and reckless of his writings, and the most lengthy of his existing poems. How Donne supported his wife and himself and where he resided, from 1602 to 1605, is not clearly known, but during a part of this time they were the guests of Sir Francis Wooley at Pyrford. They moved in the last-named year to a small manor-house at Mitcham, a discomfortable and unhealthy dwelling. At this time and until 1607 Donne was helping Morton, long afterwards Bishop of Durham, in his controversies with the Catholics. When this work was ended, Morton proposed to his helper that he should enter the Church of England, in which he offered him instant promotion. This offer, however, Donne was not prepared to accept, and with "faint breath and perplexed countenance" thankfully declined it. His refusal did the more honour to the scrupulosity of his conscience in that, by some decay or early waste of his fortune, Donne was now reduced to the very straits of poverty. It was at the climax of sickness and indigence that he wrote, about 1608, the singular treatise on suicide called *Biathanatos*, in which, frankly confessing that the temptation to put an end to his life was often present with him, he tried to prove that "self-homicide is not so naturally sin that it may never be otherwise." At this juncture, however, Sir George More tardily forgave his daughter, and gave the Donnes a handsome allowance. In 1610 Donne published his prose treatise called *Pseudo-Martyr*, and in 1611 he wrote his curious squib against the Jesuits, called *Ignatius his Conclave*. To this time, also, may be attributed his two cycles of *Holy Sonnets*, in which the majesty of his sombre imagination is finely exemplified.

At the round earth's imagined corners blow  
 Your trumpets, angels, and arise, arise  
 From death, you numberless infinities  
 Of souls, and to your scatter'd bodies go;  
 All whom the flood did, and fire shall o'erthrow,  
 All whom war, death, age, agues, tyrannies,  
 Despair, law, chance hath slain, and you, whose eyes  
 Shall behold God, and never taste death's woe  
 But let them sleep, Lord, and me mourn a space  
 For, if above all these my sins abound,  
       How can I then ask abundance of Thy grace,  
 Who art there—Here on this lowly ground,  
 Teach me how to repent, for that's as good  
 As if thou hadst seal'd my pardon with Thy blood

In 1610 Sir Robert Drury became Donne's patron, and the poet published in 1611-12 two extravagantly transcendental elegies, *An Anatomy of the World*, in celebration of the knight's daughter, who had just died in her fourteenth year. In 1612 he went with Drury to Paris, but returned without any definite employment. "No man," he writes in 1614, "attends Court fortunes more impatiently than I do." But before that year was out the King had insisted on his taking holy orders, and in January 1615, Donne was ordained. He was, however, long disappointed of any promotion, and when his wife died, on August 15, 1617, her allowance ceased and Donne was left "a man of narrow, unsettled estate and the careful [anxious] father of seven children then living." After the death of Mrs. Donne, the poet "became crucified to the world," and adopted an ascetic mode of life which he preserved to the end. But he acceded to the invitation of the benchers

of Lincoln's Inn to become their Reader, and in 1619 he accompanied Lord Doncaster on his Embassy to Germany. In 1621 Donne was appointed Dean of St. Paul's, and he died on March 31, 1631, being buried in his cathedral, where a very curious portrait-statue of him, wrapped in a winding-sheet, still exists. He was the most powerful and splendid preacher of his time, "carrying some to heaven in holy raptures and enticing others to amend their life"; Izaak Walton compared him in the pulpit to an angel leaning from a cloud. The main part of Donne's writings were posthumously published—his *Poems* in 1633; his *Sermons* (with, in the first volume, a *Life* by Walton) in 1640, 1649, and 1661; his *Biathanatos* in 1634; his *Letters* in 1651. On one of the many occasions of his sudden departure on foreign travel, Donne addressed the following epistle to his wife:

Sweetest love, I do not go  
 For weariness of thee,  
 Nor in hope the world can show  
 A fitter love for me,  
 But since that I  
 At the last must part, 'tis best,  
 Thus to use myself in jest  
 By feign'd deaths to die.

Yesternight the sun went hence,  
 And yet is here to-day;  
 He hath no desire nor sense,  
 Nor half so short a way;  
 Then fear not me,  
 But believe that I shall make  
 Speedier journeys, since I take  
 More wings and spurs than he.

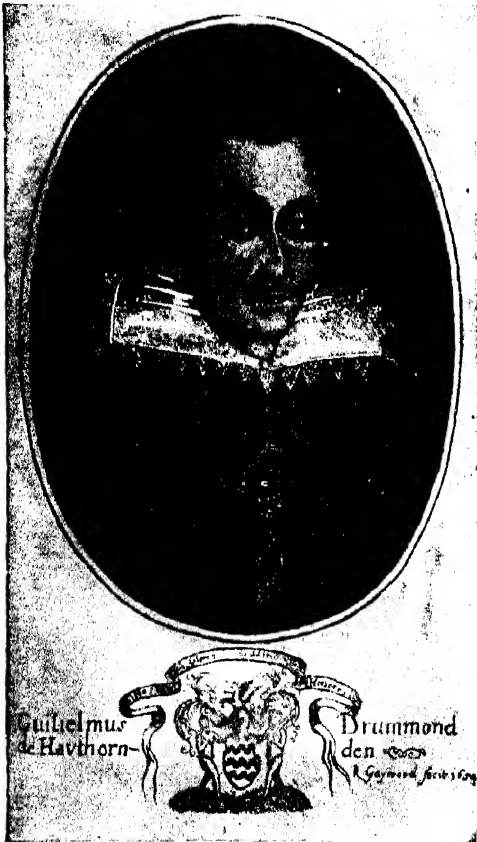
O how feeble is man's power,  
 That if good fortune fall,  
 Cannot add another hour,  
 Nor a lost hour recall;  
 But come bad chance,  
 And we join to it our strength,  
 And we teach it art and length,  
 Itself o'er us to advance.

When thou sigh'st, thou sigh'st not wind,  
 But sigh'st my soul away;  
 When thou weep'st, unkindly kind,  
 My life's blood doth decay.  
 It cannot be  
 That thou lov'st me as thou say'st,  
 If in thine my life thou waste,  
 That art the best of me.

Let not thy divining heart  
 Forethink me any ill;  
 Destiny may take thy part,  
 And may thy fears fulfil.  
 But think that we  
 Are but turn'd aside to sleep;  
 They who one another keep  
 Alive, ne'er parted be.

A couple of stanzas from *The Canonisation* may exemplify the fiery violence of his early muse :

For God's sake hold your tongue, and let me love !  
 Or chide my palsy, or my gout ;  
 My five gray hairs, or ruin'd fortune flout ;  
 With wealth your state, your mind with arts improve  
 Take you a course, get you a place,  
 Observe his Honour or his Grace,  
 Or the king's real, or his stamp'd face  
 Contemplate ; what you will, approve,  
 So you will let me love.



William Drummond of Hawthornden

*From an engraving by R. Graywood*

Alas ! alas ! who's injured by my love ?  
 What merchant's ships have my  
 sighs drown'd ?  
 Who says my tears have over-  
 flow'd his ground ?  
 When did my colds a forward spring  
 remove ?  
 When did the heats which my  
 veins fill  
 Add one more to the plaguie bill ?  
 Soldiers find wars, and lawyers find  
 out still  
 Litigious men, which quarrels move,  
 Tho' she and I do love.

While literature, and particularly poetry, flourished with such magnificence in the English dominions of King James, the removal of the seat of government to London seems to have starved intellectual effort north of the Tweed. To the Scottish ballads, which form an independent group of compositions of high national importance, attention has already been given. The literary graces now generally cultivated in Scotland were those which were in fashion in England and France ; we look in vain for what can be

considered an independent Scots movement at this juncture. Du Bartas, in the translations of Joshua Sylvester, was greatly admired in Edinburgh, and the influence on current Scottish verse came from him and in a less measure from Spenser. Sir Robert Ayton, who wrote English with studied elegance abandoned the vernacular altogether ; the surviving poems of the Earl of Ancrum fail to justify the reputation he enjoyed as a sonneteer ; and the Earl of Stirling, though preferred by his Scottish contemporaries to Tasso, is a

pedantic and lumbering writer. The best of all the Scotch poets of this age, by far, is WILLIAM DRUMMOND of Hawthornden, who had studied Sidney and Ronsard, but had, peculiar to himself, a rich note of solemn music, which he exercised in sonnets, madrigals and canzones of genuine value. He had the honour of attracting the notice of Milton, who borrowed with slight adaptation Drummond's

Immortal Amaranthus, princely Rose,  
Sad Violet, and that sweet flower that bears  
In sanguine spots the tenour of our woes.

There is beauty, but no great elevation in the poetry of Drummond; it is sensuous, uniform, and dyed with gorgeous colours. Its fault is a certain studied artificiality, and a tendency to give way, prematurely, to that mania for violent and tasteless imagery which was already invading the Italian and Spanish writers whom Drummond was among the earliest in these islands to study.

**William Drummond** (1585-1640) belonged to one of the best families of Scotland, and claimed kinship, through Annabella, the Queen of Robert III., with the royal family. His father, Sir John Drummond, became gentleman-usher to James VI.; the poet was



Hawthornden

*From Grose's "Antiquities of Scotland," 1789*

the eldest son, and was born at his father's romantic house of Hawthornden on December 13, 1585. After taking his degree in the University of Edinburgh, Drummond proceeded in 1607 to Bourges, and thence to Paris, being absent on the Continent until he succeeded to the estates of Hawthornden in 1610. He published a fine elegy on the death of Prince Henry in 1613, and a volume of *Poems* in 1616. His *Forth Feasting*, a panegyric on the King, belongs to 1617. In the winter of 1618, Ben Jonson paid Drummond a long visit in Edinburgh and at Hawthornden, and the Scotch poet took invaluable notes of Jonson's conversation. Drummond's *Flowers of Sion* appeared in 1623, and to these religious poems was appended the admirable prose treatise called *The Cypress Grove*. He had suffered in his youth the misfortune of seeing his intended bride carried off by a fever just before their wedding-day, and he remained long inconsolable; but in 1632 he married a peasant-girl, the daughter of a village minister, who bore him nine children. Drummond was deeply attached to the royal house, and his death, which happened on December 4, 1640, is said to have been hastened by his excessive grief at the "martyrdom" of Charles I. The rich lyric strain of Drummond is exemplified in the canzone which opens thus:

Phœbus, arise,  
 And paint the sable skies  
 With azure, white, and red ;  
 Rouse Memnon's mother from her Tithon's bed,  
 That she thy carrier may with roses spread ;  
 The nightingales thy coming eachwhere sing ;  
 Make an eternal spring !  
 Give life to this dark world which lieth dead !  
 Spread forth thy golden hair  
 In larger locks than thou wast wont before,  
 And, emperor-like, decore  
 With diadem of pearl thy temples fair.



William Drummond of Hawthornden

*After the portrait by C. Janssen*

If Beauty, with thee born, too died with thee ?  
 World, plain no more of Love, nor count his harms ;  
 With his pale trophies Death hath hung his arms.

The best of Drummond's sonnets are among the most dignified productions of the Jacobean age. Those *To My Lute* and *To a Nightingale* are in all the anthologies. This is less familiar :

As, in a dusky and tempestuous night,  
 A star is wont to spread her locks  
 of gold,  
 And while her pleasant rays abroad  
 are roll'd,  
 Some spiteful cloud doth rob us of her  
 sight ;  
 Fair soul, in this black age so shin'd  
 thou bright,  
 And made all eyes with wonder thee  
 behold,  
 Till ugly Death, depriving us of light,  
 In his grim misty arms thee did  
 enfold.  
 Who more shall vaunt true beauty  
 here to see ?  
 What hope doth more in any heart  
 remain,  
 That such perfections shall his  
 reason reign,

At the close of the Elizabethan age the range of poetic interest began to be widened, and at the same time dangerous exotic influences were introduced by the circulation of very able translations, particularly from the French and the Italian. Several of these became almost classical, and were very frequently reprinted. Ariosto, in his *Orlando Furioso*, was presented to English readers by Sir John Harington ; Tasso, in his *Godfrey of Bulloigne, or the Recovery of Jerusalem*, by Richard Carew and afterwards by Edward Fairfax ; the popular *Divine Weeks and Works* of Du Bartas by Joshua Sylvester ; above all Homer, in his entire works, was magnificently rendered by George Chapman. Each of these versions was a valuable gift to our literature and, in particular, the translation of Tasso by Fairfax, in which that gentleman proved himself to belong

to the Spenserian school of the Fletchers and Browne, was a fructifying and highly characteristic product of the period.

Chapman's translation, with what Charles Lamb called its "unconquerable quaintness," its deep sympathy with one or two aspects of the genius of Homer, and its splendid freedom and vigour of paraphrase, is a work which stands alone in the Jacobean age. Chapman employed, for the *Iliad*, an interesting rhymed couplet of fourteen feet, which is very effective when written with spirit. This is, indeed, so commonly spoken of as the general metre of Chapman's *Homer*, as to leave an impression upon us that those who praise this translation rarely proceed far in the reading of it. For Chapman soon became weary of his galloping couplet, and in the *Odyssey* and the *Hymns*, as well as in his version of Hesiod's *Days and Weeks*, he returned to the normal heroic measure. A fragment from the Eleventh Book of the *Iliad* may give an impression of his earlier treatment of the narrative :

High was the fury of his lance. But,  
 having beat them close  
 Beneath their walls, the both-worlds'  
 Sire did not again repose  
 On fountain-flowing Ida's tops, being  
 newly slid from Heaven,  
 And held a lightning in his hand ;  
 from thence the charge was given  
 To Iris with the golden wings :  
 "Thaumantia, fly," said he,  
 "And tell Troy's Hector that as long  
 as he enrag'd shall see

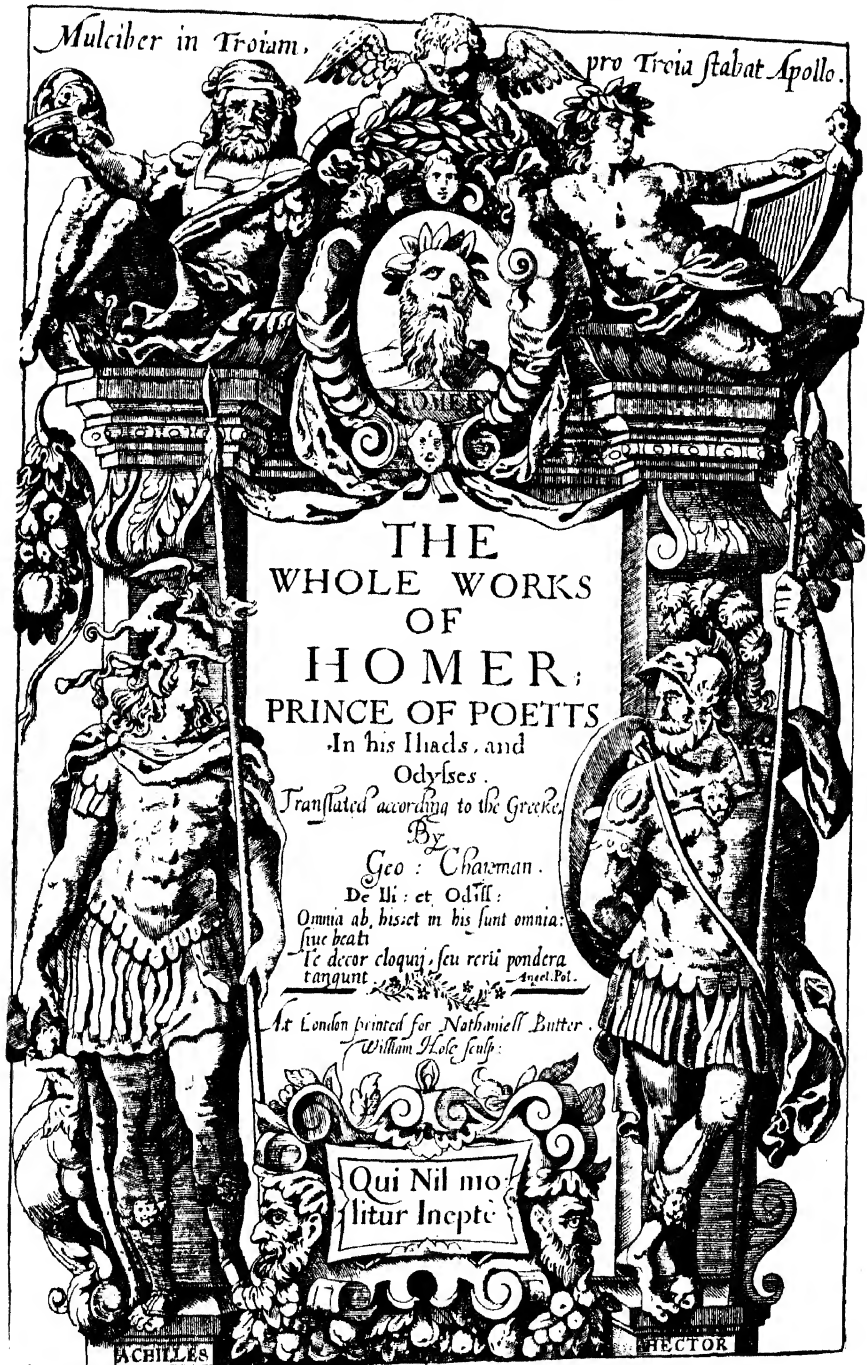


Engraved portrait of Chapman

From the 1616 edition of "Homer"

The soldier-loving Atreus' son amongst the foremost fight,  
 Depopulating troops of men, so long must he excite  
 Some other to resist the foe, and he no arms advance ;  
 But when he wounded takes his horse, attain'd with shaft or lance,  
 Then will I fill his arm with death, ev'n till he reach the fleet,  
 And peaceful night treads busy day beneath her sacred feet."  
 The wind-foot swift Thaumantia obey'd, and us'd her wings  
 To famous Ilion, from the mount enchas'd with silver springs,  
 And found in his bright chariot the hardy Trojan knight,  
 To whom she spake the words of Jove, and vanish'd from his sight.  
 He leapt upon the sounding earth, and shook his lengthful dart,  
 And everywhere he breath'd exhorts, and stirr'd up every heart.  
 A dreadful fight he set on foot. His soldiers straight turn'd head.  
 The Greeks stood firm. In both the hosts, the field was perfected.  
 But Agamemnon, foremost still, did all his side exceed,  
 And would not be the first in name unless the first in deed.

From this we may turn to Chapman's treatment of the *Odyssey*, where



Title page of Chapman's "Homer," 1616

it is interesting to find him using the measure which Pope was to employ for the same purpose a hundred years later. Here is a fragment from the Fourth Book:



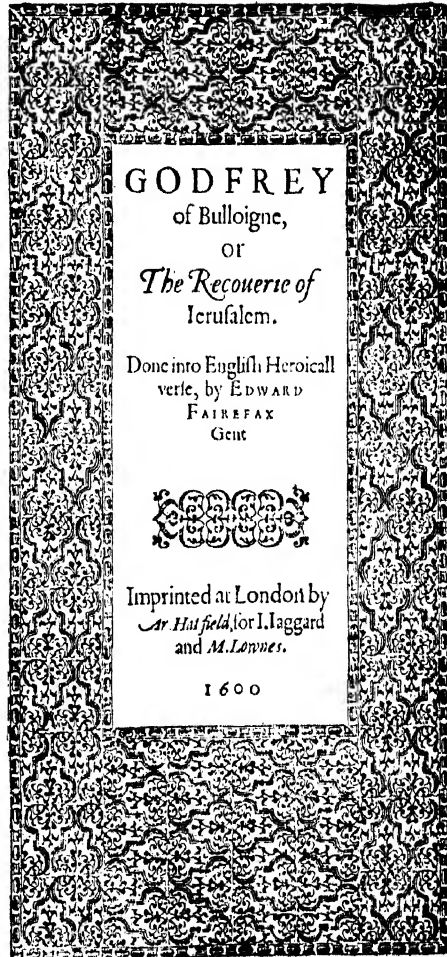
While this his thoughts disputed, forth did shine,  
 Like to the golden distaff-deck'd Divine,  
 From her bed's high and odoriferous room  
 Helen. To whom, of an elaborate loom,  
 Adrasta set a chair; Alcippe brought  
 A piece of tapestry of fine wool wrought;

Phylo a silver cabinet conferr'd,  
 Given by Alcandra nuptially endear'd  
 To Lord Polybius, whose abode in  
 Thebes  
 The Egyptian city was, where wealth  
 in heaps  
 His famous house held, out of which  
 did go,  
 In gift to Atrides, silver bath-tubs  
 two,  
 Two tripods, and of fine gold talents ten.  
 His wife did likewise send to Helen  
 then  
 Fair gifts, a distaff that of gold was  
 wrought,  
 And that rich cabinet that Phylo  
 brought,  
 Round, and with gold ribb'd, now of  
 fine thread full;  
 On which extended, crown'd with  
 finest wool  
 Of violet gloss, the golden distaff lay.

Chapman's enthusiasm for his subject was extreme; he asserted with a loud voice that "of all books extant in all kinds, Homer is the first and best." In early youth the magnificence of the Greek had impressed itself upon his imagination, and in his old age he was still rapturously contemplating "this full sphere of poesy's sweetest prime." He translated what others, and in particular Politian, had written in the praise of Homer, and his original epistles recur to the beloved theme.

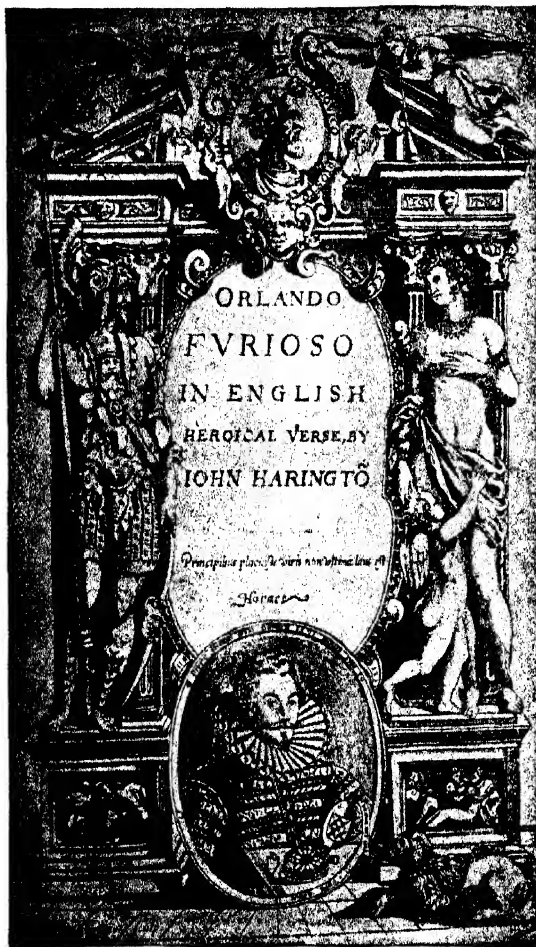
At the suggestion of Bacon, and supported by the praise of Ben Jonson and Drayton, Chapman turned from Homer to the translation of Hesiod's *Book of Days*, but here his "Attic elocution" flags and fails him. His whole heart was with Homer, and Homer alone.

The publication of the *Jerusalem Delivered* of Torquato Tasso, and the sensational success which it had enjoyed throughout the Catholic world, had greatly excited interest in England, where Italian books seem to have had numerous readers. The earliest version, that of Richard Carew, was published here before the brief life of Tasso closed in darkness at San Onofrio;



Title-page of "Godfrey of Bulloigne," 1600

the second, that of EDWARD FAIRFAX, appeared only five years after that event, so that it was really an Italian contemporary to whom these English honours were paid. The version of Carew, of which only five cantos saw the light, was kept pedantically close to the original. The publisher, boasting of "how strict a course the translator hath tied himself in," printed the Italian text opposite each page further to emphasise the literalness. This determination



Title-page of "Orlando Furioso," with portrait of Harington, by W. Rogers

to be accurate makes Carew very stiff, and sometimes almost unintelligible; his translation is, at its worst, hardly more than a "crib" to Tasso. This is an example of it at its best:

Within few days this Dame her journey ends,

There where the Franks their large pavilions spread,  
Whose beauty rare at his appearance lends

Babbling to tongues, and eyes a-gazing led:

As when some star or comet strange ascends,

And in clear day through sky his beams doth shed;

They flock in plumps this pilgrim fair to view,

And to be wised what cause her thither drew.

Not Argos, Cyprus, Delos e'er present

Patterns of shape or beauty could so dear;

Gold are her locks, which, in white shadow pent,

Eft do but glimpse, eft all disclos'd appear,

As when new cleans'd we see the element,—

Sometimes the sun shines through white cloud unclear,

Sometimes from cloud out-gone, his rays more bright

He sheds abroad, doubling of day the light.

To turn from Carew to Fairfax is to pass from a crabbed experiment to one of the most admirable transfusions of poetry from one language to another which has ever been achieved. Tasso's rich epic, with its embroidered episodes and its pictures of radiant chivalry, is genuinely transferred by Fairfax to the atmosphere of England. That he was so harmonious and "prevailing" a poet in translation is the more remarkable in that such specimens of his original

verse as have been preserved are without value. Fairfax existed only when he was guided by the magical genius of Tasso. A fragment of his description of Rinaldo at the Mount of Olives may here be given :

Thus praved he. With purple wings up-flew,  
In golden weed, the morning's lusty Queen,  
Begilding with the radiant beams she threw  
His helm, his harness, and the mountain green ;

I offere this, that in all remembrance, the young and the sword will all, and  
that the golden is above the sword, they that wear plumed above their helmets  
doe them (though they know it not) confess the saying, *Cadant arma togæ* /  
My Education hath bin such, and I trust my manners and spirit both are such  
as neither shall desert you to the service of my Prince and Country, whether  
be with sword or weapon, only my desert is my service may be accepted,  
and I doubt not, but it shall be acceptable, to the ruling Prince. As for good  
country of mine, I want would be a good step, and to that good country your  
honour commendation, I perswade me would be a good means. So I humbly  
take my leave this 21<sup>th</sup> of August.

Your honour most humble

John Haryngton.

Facsimile Letter from Haryngton to Lady Russell

British Museum, Lansdowne MS. 82

Upon his breast and forehead gently blew  
The air, that balm and nardus breath'd unseen  
And o'er his head, let down from clearest skies,  
A cloud of pure and precious dew there lies.

The heavenly dew was on his garments spread,  
To which compared, his clothes pale ashes seem,  
And sprinkled so that all that paleness fled,  
And thence of purest white bright rays outstream :  
So cheer'd are the flowers, late wither'd,  
With the sweet comfort of the morning beam,  
And so, returned to youth, a serpent old  
Adorns herself in new and native gold.

The lovely whiteness of his changèd weed  
 The prince perceivèd well and long admired ;  
 Toward the forest march'd he on with speed,  
 Resolv'd, as such adventures great required ;  
 Thither he came, whence, shrinking back for dread  
 Of that strange desert's sight, he first retirèd ;  
 But not to him fearful or loathsome made  
 That forest was, but sweet with pleasant shade.



From the engraved portrait in the 1633 edition  
 of *Du Bartas*

**Richard Carew** (1555-1620) was born at East Anthony, in Cornwall, and was educated as a gentleman-commoner of Christ Church, Oxford. He disputed in public with Philip Sidney when they both were children; a little later Carew is associated as an antiquary with the historians Camden, Spelman, and Raleigh. He represented various Cornish boroughs in parliament, and in 1602 he published a valuable *Survey of Cornwall*. His first instalment of Tasso, called *Godfrey of Bulloigne*, was published at Exeter in 1594. Of the career of **Edward Fairfax** very little is known. He was probably the natural son of Sir Thomas Fairfax of Denton. Almost all his life was spent in delightful retirement in the forest of Knaresborough. His *Godfrey of Bulloigne* was printed first in 1600. It is believed that Edward Fairfax died in 1635. **Sir John Harington** (or **Haryngton**) (1561-1612) was a godson of Queen Elizabeth, and he translated the *Orlando*

*Furioso* of Ariosto in 1591, in obedience to her command. A very odd publication of Harington's in prose, the *Metamorphosis of Ajax*, 1596, which is partly a useful hygienic treatise and partly a savage Rabelaisian satire, deeply offended the Queen, and Harington was driven from Court. He cast in his lot with Essex, and shared his adventures and his disgrace. The *Epigrams* of Harington were much admired, and were collected, in 1613, after his death. He was no

Being mforced (through the grievous visitation of  
 Gods heavie hand, upon your Highnes poore Citty of Lon-  
 don) thus long (& yet longer like) to deferre the Impres-  
 sion of my slender Labours (long since meant unto your  
 Ma<sup>ty</sup>) I thought it more then tyme, by some other  
 mean, to tender my humble Homage to your Highnes.  
 But wanting both leisure, in my self; & (here in the Country)  
 such helps, as I could have wished, To copie the entire  
 Worke (for either your Ma<sup>ty</sup> reading) I was faine thus -  
 souldamie to scribble over this small Parte That (in -  
 the mean time) by a Part, I might (as it were) give  
 your Highnes Possession of the whole; untill it shall  
 please the Almighty, in his endles Mercie to give an  
 end to this lamentable Affliction, w<sup>ch</sup> for his deere Sonns  
 sake I most earnestlie beseech him. & ever to protect your  
 sacred Ma<sup>ty</sup> & all your Royal Familie under the wings  
 of his gracious favour

Your Mostes

- most humble Subj<sup>t</sup>.

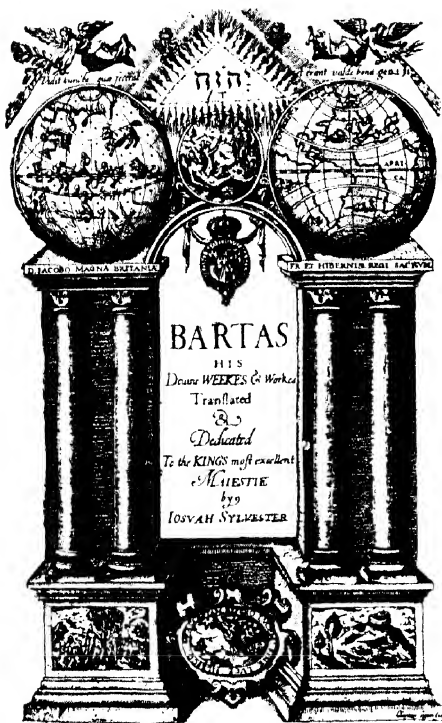
& devoted Servant;

Joshua Sylvester

Letter from Sylvester to James I.

poet, but a man of great shrewdness of observation, prompt and cool in action, and of a ready wit. An immense popularity attended the versions of **Joshua**

**Sylvester** (1563-1618), who attached himself to the French poet Du Bartas, as Chapman did to Homer. Sylvester was the son of a Kentish clothier, and he was educated under Hadrianus Saravia at Southampton, and then at Leyden. He became a merchant-adventurer, and spent much time in the Low Countries. As early as 1591 he began to publish instalments of his immense version of *The Divine Weeks and Works* of Du Bartas, on which he was engaged all the rest of his life. In 1613 Sylvester became secretary to the great Merchants' Company at Middelburg, in Zealand, and there he died on September 28, 1618. His version of the French poet's Puritan epic long retained its popularity, and it is well known that Milton was intimately acquainted with it. *The Divine Weeks and Works*, whether in Du Bartas' French or in Sylvester's English, has now become intolerably tedious and unattractive; but the translator, had he concentrated his powers on a happier object, might have enriched



Title-page of Sylvester's translation of Du Bartas' "*Divine Weekes and Workes*," 1605

the language. This is an example of his work at its best :

Sweet Night, without thee, without thee alas!  
Our life were loathsome, even a hell to pass;  
For outward pains and inward passion still,  
With thousand deaths, would soul and body thrill.  
O Night, thou pullest the proud mask away  
Wherewith vain actors in this world's great play  
By day disguise them. For, no difference  
Night makes between the peasant and the prince.  
The poor and rich, the prisoner and the judge,  
The foul and fair, the master and the drudge,  
The fool and wise, Barbarian and the Greek,  
For Night's black mantle covers all alike.

## CHAPTER VIII

### JACOBAN DRAMA

THERE can be no question that in the first quarter of the seventeenth century the imaginative force of the English people ran so vehemently in a single channel, that all other manifestations of it are in danger of being regarded as side-streams or backwaters. As the man of fancy in the reign of Elizabeth had naturally turned to an amorous or pastoral lyric as the medium in which to express the passion which worked in him, so his successor in the reigns of James I. and Charles I. naturally produced a tragedy or a farcical tragi-comedy. The drama was the characteristic art of the age in England, and even if we omit Shakespeare from our consideration, as a figure too disturbing and overshadowing, the fact remains true that it was in the drama that Jacobean England displayed its main current of imagination.

By the end of the sixteenth century the question of the direction which English drama was to take was absolutely settled. The classical play, which had enjoyed so overwhelming a success in Italy and France, had been glanced at by our poets, gingerly touched and rejected as inappropriate and unsympathetic. Just as in France the inspiration of the dramatists had been from the first directly academic, so with us it was directly popular. The earliest modern plays in France, such as those of Jodelle and La Péruse, had been classroom entertainments, given in French in place of Latin, by actors who imitated the verses of Seneca in the vernacular instead of repeating them in the original. This was how French tragedy was formed, and on these lines it rose, smoothly and steadily, to Corneille and Racine. But we have seen that English tragedy was, from the first, a wild and popular entertainment, allied to the mediæval morality and to the mediæval farce rather than to anything that Aristotle could have legislated for or Scaliger have approved. The experiments of Fulke Greville, and still more of Samuel Daniel (who, like Jodelle, but half a century later than he, wrote a Senecan *Cleopatra* in choruses) may give us an idea of what our drama might have become if we had taken the same turn as the French.

By 1600, however, the question was finally settled. The taste for declamation, for long moral disquisitions in rhymed soliloquy, had been faintly started by a few University pedants and had been rejected by the public in favour of a loud, loose tragedy and a violently contrasted and farcical comedy. In England something of the same national disposition to adopt for the stage extravagant and complicated plots, which had been met with a few years

before in Spain, had determined the action of our theatrical poets. The tragedies of Argensola, the predecessor of Lope de Vega, are described by Mr. Fitzmaurice-Kelly as "a tissue of butcheries," and this poet was an exact contemporary of our carnage-loving Chapmans and Tourneurs. We see in Spain, although the Spanish drama has little positive resemblance to the Elizabethan, parallel lines of character which are not like anything which we meet with in the dramatic Renaissance of Italy or France. But whatever adaptations of the style of stage-plays might have seemed imminent about 1595, they were all swept away at the approach of the genius of Shakespeare. When a writer of superlative force takes the development of a branch of national literature under his sway, he bends it, in its superficial forms, to his will. Jacobean drama cannot be judged apart from the fact that the most illustrious poet of the world chose to make it his instrument.

But if Shakespeare determined, beyond any power of Latinising contemporaries to divert it, the line which the vast mass of Jacobean drama should take, his own relation to his fellow playwrights is confused by the fact that he towers immeasurably above them. He would illustrate his age much better, and form a much more useful guide to its intricacies, if he were not raised over it by such a mountainous elevation. One of the penalties of altitude is isolation, and in reviewing the state of literary feeling in England in the Jacobean times, we gain the impression that a child nowadays may be more familiar with the proportion between Shakespeare and his fellows than the brightest of these latter could be; since those highest qualities of his, which we now take for granted, remained invisible to his contemporaries. To them, unquestionably, he was a stepping-stone to the superior art of Jonson, to the more fluid and obvious graces of Beaumont and Fletcher. Of those whose inestimable privilege it was to meet Shakespeare day by day, we have no evidence that even Ben Jonson perceived the absolute supremacy of his genius. The case is rather curious, for it was not that anything austere or arrogant in himself or his work repelled recognition, or that those who gazed were blinded by excess of light. On the contrary, it seemed to his own friends that they appreciated his amiable, easy talent at its proper value; he was "gentle" Shakespeare to them, and they loved the man and they were ready to borrow freely from his poetry. But that he excelled them all in every poetical artifice, soaring above them all like an elm in a coppice of hazels, this, had it been whispered at the Mermaid, would have aroused smiles of derision. The elements of Shakespeare's perfection were too completely fused to attract vulgar wonder at any one point, and those intricate refinements of style and of character which now excite in us an almost superstitious amazement did not appeal to the rough and hasty Jacobean hearer. In considering Shakespeare's position during his lifetime, moreover, it must not be forgotten that his works made no definite appeal to the reading class until after his death. The study of "Shakespeare" as a book cannot date farther back than 1623.

To us, however, our closer acquaintance with Shakespeare must prove a disastrous preparation for appreciating his contemporaries. He rises out of all





William Congreve.

AFTER A MINIATURE IN THE ROYAL LIBRARY, WINDSOR CASTLE.



John Fletcher.

AFTER A MINIATURE IN THE ROYAL  
LIBRARY AT WINDSOR CASTLE.



John Donne.

AFTER A MINIATURE IN THE ROYAL  
LIBRARY AT WINDSOR CASTLE.



Ben Jonson.

AFTER A MINIATURE IN THE ROYAL  
LIBRARY AT WINDSOR CASTLE.



measurement with them by comparison, and we are tempted to repeat that unjust trope of Landor's in which he calls the other Jacobean dramatists mushrooms growing round the foot of the Oak of Arden. They had, indeed, noble flashes of the creative light, but Shakespeare walks in the soft and steady glow of it. As he proceeds, without an effort, life results; his central qualities are ceaseless growth. In him, too, characteristics are found fully formed which the rest of the world had at that time barely conceived. His liberality, his tender respect for women, his absence from prejudice, his sympathy for every peculiarity of human emotion—these are miraculous, but the vigour of his imagination explains the marvel. He sympathised because he comprehended, and he comprehended because of the boundless range of his capacity. The quality in which Shakespeare is unique among the poets of the world, and that which alone explains the breadth, the unparalleled vivacity and coherency of the vast world of his imagination, is what Coleridge calls his "omnipresent creativeness," his power of observing everything, of forgetting nothing, and of combining and reissuing impressions in complex and infinite variety. In this godlike gift not the most brilliant of his great contemporaries approached him.

The misfortune of the Jacobean dramatists who were not Shakespeare lay in their contentedness with the results of their very remarkable personal energy. Their love of extravagance betrayed them into shapelessness, their rebellious scorn of discipline into anarchy. But perhaps their most serious fault was one inherent in the system of dramatic composition which they had adopted. They fell away from the examination of sane and normal types of humanity, in which they suspected the presence of the hated academic spirit, and they devoted all their attention to the "humours" of violent exceptions and odd varieties of humanity. As the fire of passion sank, they endeavoured to stir its embers by a more and more bombastic and grotesque insistence on these "humours," losing at last, in their preposterous pursuit of farce, all touch with the delicate spirit of truth. In their confusion of plot, in their far-fetched imagery, in their jumble of circumstance and event, in their fantastic and unearthly caprices, in their violently contrasted outbreaks of vituperance and amorousness, we feel the minor Jacobean dramatists to present to us, with all the air of those who offer divine gifts, a medley of what is good and bad, of what is wholesome and stimulating, with what is decaying and distasteful.

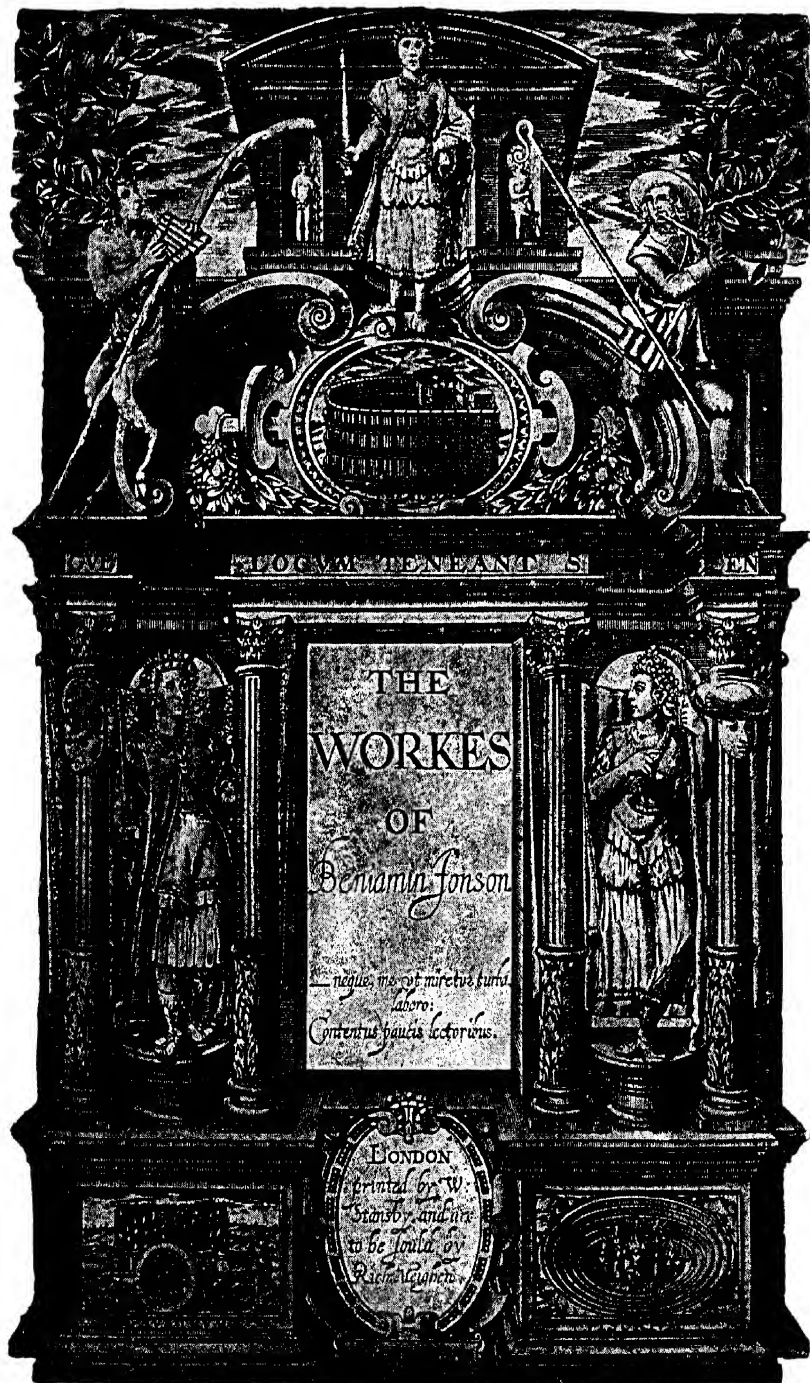
The general criticism of the nineteenth century was indulgent to the faults and enthusiastic about the merits of the Jacobean dramatists. It was observed by Charles Lamb, Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt that for a hundred and fifty years the beauties of the contemporaries of Shakespeare had been unduly slighted; these critics set themselves to show in what manner those great men felt, "what sort of loves and enmities theirs were, how their griefs were tempered, and their full-swoln joys abated." No form of literature is more effectively presented by quotation than the drama of these Jacobean poets, and Charles Lamb, in 1808, dazzled all sensitive readers by the richness of the anthology he gathered from the English dramatists who lived about the

time of Shakespeare. Since the age of Lamb, the tone of **criticism** has been increasingly eulogistic, until in the lips of Mr. Swinburne it reached, in prose and verse, the proportions of a paean. It can hardly be questioned that the critics of whom Mr. Swinburne is at once the most learned and the most inspired, who approach the minor writers of the age of James I with such epithets as "unflawed" (Marston), "sweetest of all thy time save one" (Dekker), "a full-blown flower in heaven" (John Day), and who occupy themselves exclusively with the fugitive beauties and felicitous occasional audacities of their favourites, are unsafe guides for those who, in humdrum fashion, read the works of the authors so lauded, not in picturesque quotation, but steadily through as dramas representative of human life on a possible public stage. From Charles Lamb downwards, our fanatics of the Jacobean drama have brought with them half the qualities they have attributed, they have seen too much on the one hand, and too little on the other. These powerful and romantic poets are no longer in need of being urged upon ignorant or unwilling admirers. They are rather in danger of suffering from excess of praise and from a neglect of those errors of proportion and discretion which prevent them from claiming a place in the very highest rank of literary accomplishment. In a brief survey of non-Shakespearean drama from 1600 onwards, we ought not to blind ourselves to the fact that the highest point had already been reached, and that a decline was imminent.

#### *Ben Jonson*

With the turn of the century a reaction against pure imagination began to make itself felt in England, and this movement found a perfect expositor in BEN JONSON. Born seven years later than Shakespeare, he worked, like his fellows, in Henslowe's manufactory of romantic drama, until, in consequence of running a rapier through a man, the fierce poetic bricklayer was forced to take up for a while the position of an Ishmael. The immediate result was the production of a comedy, *Every Man in his Humour*, in which a new thing was started in drama, the study of what Jonson called "recent humours or manners of men that went along with the times." In other words, in the midst of that luxurious romanticism which had culminated in Shakespeare, Ben Jonson set out to be what we now call a "realist" or a "naturalist." In doing this, he went back as rigidly as he could to the methods of Plautus, and fixed his "grave and consecrated eyes" on an academic scheme by which poetry was no longer to be a mere entertainment but a form of lofty mental gymnastic. Jonson called his solid and truculent pictures of the age "comic satires," and his intellectual arrogance combining with his contempt for those who differed from him, soon called down upon his proud and rugged head all the hostility of Parnassus. About the year 1600 Jonson's pugnaciousness had roused against him an opposition in which, perhaps, Shakespeare alone forbore to take a part. But Jonson was a formidable antagonist, and when he fought with a brother poet, he had a trick, in a double sense, of taking his pistol from him and beating him too.

A persistent rumour, constantly refuted, will have it that Shakespeare was one of those whom Jonson hated. The most outspoken of misanthropes did



Title-page of the Collected Works of Ben Jonson, 1616

not, we may be sure, call another man "star of poets" and "soul of the age" without meaning what he said; but there may have been a sense in which.

while loving Shakespeare and admiring his work, Jonson disapproved of its tendency. It could hardly be otherwise. He delighted in an iron style, hammered and twisted; he must have thought that Shakespeare's "excellent phantasy, brave notions, and gentle expressions" had a flow too liquid and facile. Jonson, with his Latin paraphrases, his stiff academic procession of ideas, could but dislike the flights and frenzies of his far less learned but brisker and airier companion. And Jonson, be it remembered, had the age on his side. To see *Julius Cæsar* on the boards might be more amusing, but surely no seriously minded Jacobean could admit that it was so instructive as a performance of *Sejanus* or of *Catiline*, which gave a chapter of good sound Roman history, without lyric flowers or ornaments of style, in hard blank verse. Even the ponderous comedies of Ben Jonson were put forth by him, and were accepted by his contemporaries, as very serious contributions to the highest culture. What other men called "plays" were "works" to Jonson, as the old joke had it.

Solid and of lasting value as are the productions of Jonson, the decline begins to be observed in them. Even if we confine our attention to his two noblest plays—the *Fox* and the *Alchemist*—we cannot but admit that here, in the very heyday and glory of the English Renaissance, a fatal element is introduced. Charm, ecstasy, the free play of the emotions, the development of individual character—these are no longer the sole solicitude of the poet, who begins to dogmatise and educate, to prefer types to persons and logic to passion. It is no wonder that Ben Jonson was so great a favourite with the writers of the Restoration, for he was their natural parent. With all their rules and unities, with all their sticking for pseud-Aristotelian correctness, they were the intellectual descendants of that poet who, as Dryden said, "was willing to give place to the classics in all things." For the next fifty years English poetry was divided between loyalty to Spenser and attraction to Ben Jonson, and every year the influence of the former dwindled while that of the latter increased.

In temperament Jonson differed wholly from the other leaders of Jacobean drama. They, without exception, were romantic; he by native bias, purely classical. It is not difficult to perceive that the essential quality of his mind had far more in common with Corneille and with Dryden than with Shakespeare. He was so full of intelligence that he was able to adopt, and to cultivate with some degree of zest, the outward forms of romanticism, but his heart was always with the Latins, and his favourite works, though not indeed his best, were his stiff and solid Roman tragedies. He brought labour to the construction of his poetry, and he found himself surrounded by facile pens, to whom he seemed, or fancied that he seemed, "barren, dull, lean, a poor writer." He did not admire much of the florid ornament in which they delighted, and which we also have been taught to admire. He grew to hate the kind of drama which Marlowe had inaugurated. No doubt, sitting in the Apollo room of the Old Devil Tavern, with his faithful Cartwright, Brome and Randolph round him, he would truculently point to the inscription above the chimney,

*Inspida pœmata nulla recitantor*, and not spare the masters of the lovely age which he had outlived. He would speak "to the capacity of his hearers," as he tells us that the true artificer should do, and they would encourage him, doubtless, to tell of doctrines and precepts, of the dignity of the ancients, of Aristotle, "first accurate critic and truest judge" of poetry. They would listen, nor be aware that, for all his wisdom, and all the lofty distinction of his intellect, the palmy hour of English drama—that hour in which it had sung out like a child, ignorant of rules and precepts—had passed for ever.

Not the less does Ben Jonson hold a splendid and durable place in our annals. His is the most vivid and picturesque personal figure of the times; he is the most learned scholar, the most rigorous upholder of the dignity of letters, the most blustering soldier and insulting dueller in the literary arena; while his personal characteristics, "the mountain belly and the rocky face," the capacity for drawing young persons of talent around him and captivating them there, the volcanic alternations of fiery wit and smouldering, sullen arrogance, appeal irresistibly to the imagination, and make the "arch-poet" live in history. But his works, greatly admired, are little read. They fail to hold any but a trained attention; their sober majesty and massive concentration are highly praiseworthy, but not in a charming direction. His indifference to beauty tells against him.

Jonson, even in his farces, is ponderous, and if we acknowledge "the flat sanity and smoke-dried sobriety" of his best passages, what words can we find for the tedium of his worst? He was an intellectual athlete of almost unequalled vigour, who chose to dedicate the essentially prosaic forces of his mind to the art of poetry, because the age he lived in was pre-eminently a poetic one. With such a brain and such a will as his he could not but succeed. If he had stuck to bricklaying, he must have rivalled Inigo Jones. But the most skilful and headstrong master-builder cannot quite become an architect of genius.

Of the parentage of **Benjamin Jonson** (1573-1637) nothing is known but what

## EVERY MAN IN his Humor.

As it hath beene sundry times  
*publickly acted by the right*  
Honorable the Lord Gham-  
*berlaine his servants.*

---

Written by BEN. JONSON.

---

*Quod non dant proceres, dabit Histrio.*

*Haud tamen invidias vati, quæm pulchra pascunt.*

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Imprinted at London for Walker Burre, and are to  
be sold at his shoppe in Pauls Church-yard.  
1601.

Title-page of Ben Jonson's "Every Man in  
his Humour," 1601

he told Drummond, of Hawthornden. "His grandfather came from Carlisle, and, he thought, from Annandale to it; he served King Henry VIII., and was a gentleman. His father lost all his estates under Queen Mary, having been cast in prison and forfeited; at last turned minister: so he was a minister's son. He himself was posthumous born, a month after his father's decease," in 1573. Two years later his mother, who lived in London, married a master-bricklayer, who sent the child to a private school at St. Martin-in-the-Fields, and then to Westminster. Here the great William Camden "learned him" not only to read Latin and Greek but to write with freedom in prose and verse. Ben Jonson speaks of no one with greater respect than of

Camden! most reverend head, to whom I owe  
All that I am in arts, all that I know.



Lucy Harrington, Countess of Bedford

*After the portrait by Honthorst*

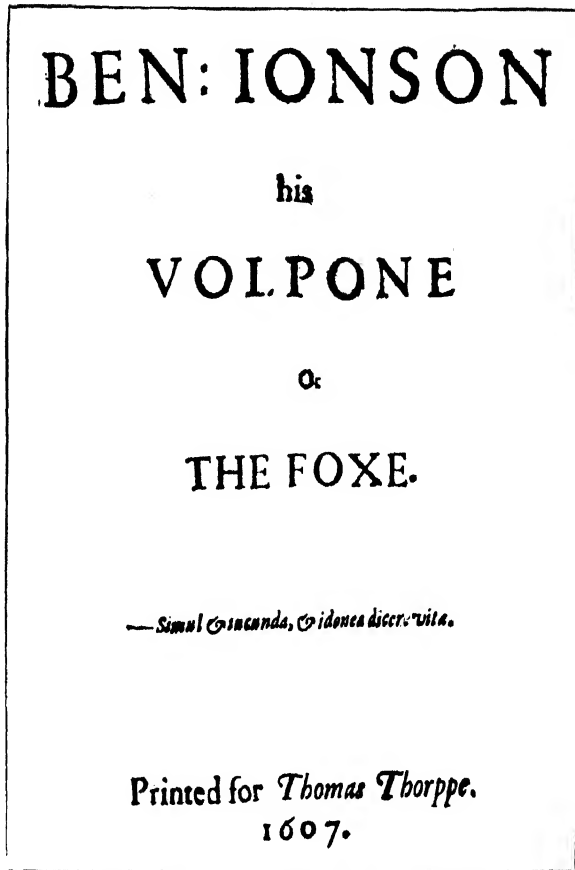
If Fuller is correct, Jonson went for a short time to St John's College, Cambridge, but he was certainly soon apprenticed to the bricklayer's trade. From this he escaped to enlist as a soldier in the Low Countries, where he had a duel with an enemy "in the face of both the camps," killing him, and "taking *spolia opima* from him." He returned to England about 1592, and married; he was not very happy in his wife, whom he described as "a shrew, but honest," nor in his children. We do not know how he was occupied until about 1597, when he is found writing for the stage, and producing the earliest of his surviving works, the comedy of *Every Man in*

*His Humour* (printed in 1601), unless, indeed, what is now called *The Case is Altered* be earlier still. In the autumn of 1598, one of the actors with whom Jonson was working in Henslowe's company was killed by him in a duel in the Fields at Shoreditch, and the poet was tried at the Old Bailey for murder. He confessed and was convicted, and came "almost to the gallows," but was released with the forfeit of all his goods and a felon's brand upon his thumb. While he was in prison for this affair, Jonson was converted to the Roman faith, in which he continued until 1610. According to an early legend, it was on his release that Shakespeare induced the Lord Chamberlain's men to buy *Every Man in His Humour*, which was certainly performed before the close of 1598; Shakespeare acted in it at the Globe. This was followed by what Ben Jonson called those "comical satires"—*Every Man out of His Humour* (1599), *Cynthia's Revels* (1600), and *The Poetaster* (1601), in which he justifies that reputation for "self-love, arrogance, impudence,



vailing" which was already beginning to attend him. Among those whom he principally attacked were Dekker and Marston, who was satirised in the *Poetaster*. These poets replied in *Satiromastix*. Ben Jonson was now living under the patronage of Lord Aubigny; in 1603 he joined the King's Company, and wrote for them the first of his Roman tragedies, *Sejanus*, which was put upon the stage, with Shakespeare in the cast. The accession of James I. seems to have been highly favourable to Ben Jonson's prosperity. The earliest of his entertainments, *The Satyr*, was given at Althorpe, and he seems to have been immediately afterwards appointed Court Poet. Amid his innumerable masques, panegyrics, and Twelfth-Night pieces, he found time for work of a solid and durable kind. His magnificent *Volpone*; or, *the Fox*, was given at the Globe Theatre in 1605; this was a notable year in Ben Jonson's life, for it not only saw the earliest of his great Court-masques, *Blackness*, produced at Whitehall in conjunction with Inigo Jones's architecture, but, with Chapman and his old insulted enemy, Marston. At the close of 1604 Jonson had written the comedy of *Eastward Ho!* which contained

"something against the Scots," for which the poets were thrown into prison. Ben Jonson's account of what followed this, given to Drummond, is amusing: "The report was that we should then have had our ears cut and noses. After our delivery. I banqueted with my friends; there was Camden. Selden, and others; at the midst of the feast my old mother drank to me, and showed me a paper she had (if the sentence had taken execution) to have mixed in the prison among my drink, which was full of lusty strong poison, and that she was no churl, she told, she intended first to have drunk of it herself." It may be that after this event Jonson withdrew, under Lord Aubigny's protection, to the country for awhile, since we hear little of him for some few years. He returned, however, to write



Title-page of Ben Jonson's "Volpone," 1607

plays for the Children of the Revels, and he was now in great force. *The Silent Woman*, acted in 1609, *The Alchemist* in 1610, and *Catiline* in 1611, display the powers of Ben Jonson at their most characteristic altitudes. Nor, in its own way, is lower praise deserved by the rich London comedy of *Bartholomew Fair*, produced in 1614. Before this date Jonson had been sent to Paris by Sir Walter Raleigh, as tutor to his young son, a responsible situation for which the poet, by his own confession, was ill-fitted. After his return to London, Jonson collected his works in one folio volume in 1616, and in the same year produced his comedy, *The Devil is an Ass*. This showed a strange decline in power, and Ben Jonson may have been conscious of this, for he wrote no more plays for nine years. He turned



Inigo Jones

*From a copy of the portrait by Van Dyck*

his attention to other branches of work, and particularly to the composition of masques. In the summer of 1618 he walked from London to Scotland, in spite of Bacon's dissuasion, who "said to him he loved not to see poesy go on other feet than poetical *dactylus* and *spondaus*." He met the poet Drummond in Edinburgh and was invited by him to stay at his house at Hawthornden. Drummond took invaluable notes of Jonson's conversation, the advantages of which he enjoyed until January 19, 1619; he also drew a somewhat caustic sketch of his burly guest himself: "He is a great lover and praiser of himself; a contemner and scorner of others; given rather to lose a friend than a jest; . . . he is passionately kind and angry; careless either to gain or keep; vindictive, but, if he be well answered, at himself . . . ; oppressed with fantasy, which hath

ever mastered his reason." Jonson intended to write a fishing pastoral about Loch Lomond, and a description of his "foot-pilgrimage." The latter was certainly written, but it perished in the fire which soon after destroyed Jonson's valuable library. In 1623 he wrote the famous poem to the memory of "my beloved Master William Shakespeare," which appeared in the First Folio. In 1625 he reappeared on the public stage with the comedy of *The Staple of News*. This was followed by *The New Inn*, in 1629; *The Magnetic Lady*, in 1632; and *A Tale of a Tub*, in 1633. These are the plays of Ben Jonson's decline, harshly but justly described by Dryden as his "dotages." The obvious decline of power in these works (although there is beautiful poetry in *The New Inn*) was doubtless connected with the poet's physical condition, for in the early months of 1626 he had been attacked by paralysis. He laboured under many infirmities, and particularly under an unwieldy shape. He described himself to Lady Covell as—

a tardy, cold,  
Unprofitable chattel, fat and old,

Laden with belly, who doth hardly approach  
His friends but to break chairs or crack a couch,  
Whose weight is twenty stone within two pound.

In 1628 he accepted the sinecure of chronologer to the City of London, but he produced nothing, and in 1631 "the barbarous court of aldermen withdrew their chandlerly pension for verjuice and mustard." He quarrelled with Inigo Jones, and lost his place at Court as masque-maker. He sank into great poverty, but the kindness of the King gave some comfort to his latest years. Ben Jonson died on August 6, 1637, and was buried in Westminster Abbey, under a plain slab, on which the words, "O rare Ben Jonson!" were afterwards carved. His charming fragment of a pastoral, *The Sad Shepherd*, was posthumously published in 1641. The decease of Jonson was treated almost as a national event, and he was mourned by all the poets of the age.

From "THE ALCHEMIST."

*Mam.* We will be brave, Puffe,  
now we have the medicine  
My meat shall all come in in  
Indian shells,  
Dishes of agate set in gold, and  
studded  
With emeralds, sapphires, hyacinths, and rubies;  
The tongues of carps, dormice  
and camels' heels,  
Boil'd in the spirit of Sol, and  
dissolved pearl,  
(Apicius' diet 'gainst the epilepsy  
And I will eat these broths with  
spoons of amber,  
Headed with diamant and carbuncle.



Ben Jonson's Tomb in Westminster Abbey

My footboy shall eat pheasants, calver'd salmons,  
Knots, godwits, lampreys: I myself will have  
The beards of barbels served, instead of salads;  
Oil'd mushrooms; and the swelling unctuous paps  
Of a fat pregnant sow, newly cut off,  
Dress'd with an exquisite and poignant sauce;  
For which, I 'll say unto my cook, "There 's gold;  
Go forth, and be a knight."

*Face.* Sir, I 'll go look  
A little, how it heightens.

*Mam.* Do.—My shirts  
I 'll have of taffata-sarsnet, soft and light  
As cobwebs ; and, for all my other raiment,  
It shall be such as might provoke the Persian,  
Were he to teach the world riot anew.  
My gloves of fishes' and birds' skins, perfumed  
With gums of paradise, and eastern air.

*Sur.* And do you think to have the stone with this ?

*Mam.* No, I do think to have all this with the stone.



Figures designed by Inigo Jones 'or a Masque

*Sur.* Why, I have heard, he must be *homo frugi*,  
A pious, holy, and religious man,  
One free from mortal sin, a very virgin——

*Mam.* That makes it——Sir, he is so. But I buy it.  
My venture brings it me. He, honest wretch,  
A notable, superstitious, good soul,  
Has worn his knees bare, and his slippers bald,  
With prayer and fasting for it ; and, sir, let him  
Do it alone, for me, still. Here he comes.  
Not a profane word, afore him : 'tis poison

*From "THE SAD SHEPHERD."*

*Alken.* Know ye the witch's dell ?

*Scarlet.* No more than I do know the walks of hell.

*Alk.* Within a gloomy dimble she doth dwell  
Down in a pit o'ergrown with brakes and briars,  
Close by the ruins of a shaken abbey,  
Torn with an earthquake down unto the ground,  
'Mongst graves and grots, near an old charnel-house,  
Where you shall find her sitting in her form,  
As fearful, and melancholic, as that  
She is about ; with caterpillars' kells,  
And knotty cobwebs, rounded in with spells.  
Then she steals forth to relief, in the fogs,  
And rotten mists, upon the fens and bogs,  
Down to the drowned lands of Lincolnshire ;  
To make ewes cast their lambs, swine eat their farrow ;  
The housewife's tun not work, nor the milk churn ;  
Writhe children's wrists, and suck their breath in sleep ;  
Get vials of their blood ; and where the sea  
Casts up his slimy ooze, search for a weed  
To open locks with, and to rivet charms,  
Planted about her, in the wicked seat  
Of all her mischiefs, which are manifold.

*John.* I wonder such a story could be told  
Of her dire deeds.

*Geo.* I thought, a witch's banks  
Had enclosed nothing but the merry pranks  
Of some old woman.

*Scar.* Yes, her malice more.

*Scath.* As it would quickly appear, had we the store  
Of his collects.

*Geo.* Ay, this good learned man  
Can speak her right.

*Scar.* He knows her shifts and haunts.

*Alk.* And all her wiles and turns. The venom'd plants  
Wherewith she kills ; where the sad mandrake grows,  
Whose groans are deathful ; the dead numbing nightshade ;  
The stupefying hemlock ; adder's tongue,  
And martagan ; the shrieks of luckless owls,  
We hear, and croaking night-crows in the air ;  
Green-bellied snakes ; blue fire-drakes in the sky ;  
And giddy flitter-mice with leather wings ;  
The scaly beetles, with their habergeons  
That make a humming murmur as they fly ;  
There, in the stocks of trees, white fays do dwell,  
And span-long elves that dance about a pool,  
With each a little changeling in their arms :  
The airy spirits play with falling stars.  
And mount the sphere of fire, to kiss the moon ;  
While she sits reading by the glow-worm's light,  
Or rotten wood, o'er which the worm hath crept,  
The baneful schedule of her nocent charms,  
And binding characters, through which she wounds  
Her puppets, the *sigilla* of her witchcraft.  
All this I know, and I will find her for you ;  
And show you her sitting in her form ; I'll lay  
My hand upon her ; make her throw her scut

## THE EPISTLE.

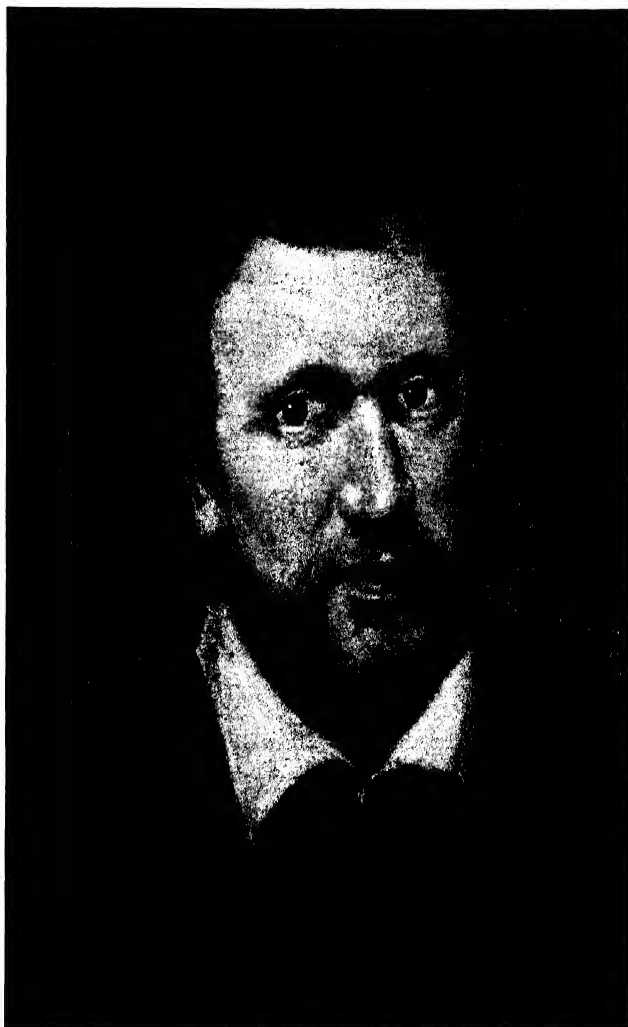
Humanity, is not the least honor of y<sup>e</sup> Majesty. For, if once the worthy Professors of these learnings shall come (as heretofore they were) to be the care of Princes, the Crowns ~~shall~~ Souveraigns wear will not more adorn these Temples; nor these flames live longer in these Medals, than in such Subjects labors Poetry, my Lord, is not known to every man; nor every day: And, in her general right, it is now my minute to thank y<sup>e</sup> Highness, who not only do honor her with y<sup>e</sup> care, but are curious to examine her with y<sup>e</sup> eye, & inquire into her beauties, & strengths. Where, though it hath proved a work of some difficulty to me to retrieve the particular authorities (according to y<sup>e</sup> gracious command, and a desire borne out of judgment) to those things, which I might obtain of fastness, and memory of my former readings, yet, now I have overcome it, the reward that moveth me is double to one self. With is, that thereby, y<sup>e</sup> excellent Understanding will not only assist me to y<sup>e</sup> own knowledge, but decline the stiffness of others original Ignorance, already bound to confuse. For with singular bounty, if my Fate (most excellent Prince, and only Delicacy of mankind) shall reserve me to the eye of y<sup>e</sup> Actions, whether in the Camp, or the Council-Chamber, I may write, not might, the doers of y<sup>e</sup> days; I will then labor to bring forth some works as were they of y<sup>e</sup> fame, as my Ambition therein is, of y<sup>e</sup> garden.

By the most true admirer of y<sup>e</sup> Highness Vertues,

And most hearty Celebrator of them.

Ben: Jonson.

*Ben Jonson*



Ben Jonson.

AFTER THE PORTRAIT BY GERARD HONTHORST.





Along her back, when she doth start before us.  
But you must give her law ; and you shall see her  
Make twenty leaps and doubles, cross the paths,  
And then squat down beside us.

*John.* Crafty crone,

I long to be at the sport, and to report it.

*Scar.* We'll make this hunting of the witch as famous  
As any other blast of venerie.

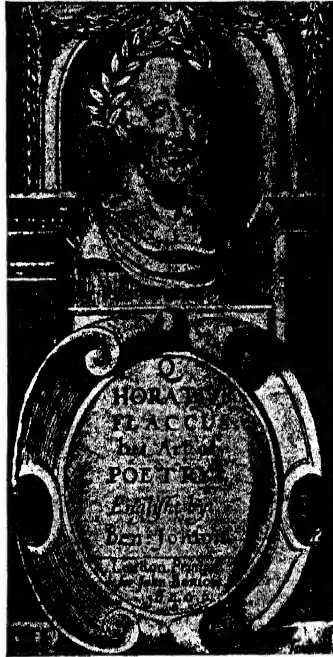
*Geo.* If we could come to see her, cry *so ho* once—

*Alk.* That I do promise, or I'm no good hag-finder.

The Masque, a form of entertainment in which music, architecture, and dancing were combined with lyrical poetry, was highly popular in the reign of James I., and in the preparation of these pageants Jonson excelled all his contemporaries, although Campion and Daniel were also skilful. In these elaborate and fanciful pieces we often find delicate snatches of song, as this from *The Masque of Beauty* (1609) :

So Beauty on the waters stood,  
When Love had severed earth from flood !  
So when he parted air from fire  
He did with concord all inspire !  
And then a motive he them taught,  
That elder than himself was thought ;  
Which thought was, yet, the child of earth,  
For Love is older than his birth.

There is no trace of the strict Jonsonian buskin in FRANCIS BEAUMONT and JOHN FLETCHER ; as even contemporary critics perceived, they simply continued the pure romanticism of Shakespeare, and they seemed to carry it further and higher. We no longer think their noon brighter than his "dawning hours," but we admit that in a certain sense the great Twin Brethren proceeded beyond him in their warm, loosely-girdled plays. They exaggerated all the dangerous elements which he had held restrained ; they proceeded, in fact, downwards, towards the inevitable decadence, gay with all the dolphin colours of approaching death. It is difficult to assign to either writer his share in the huge and florid edifice which bears their joint names. Their own age attributed to Fletcher the "keen treble" and to Beaumont the "deep bass"—comedy, that is, and tragedy respectively. Modern investigation has found less and less in their work which can be definitely ascribed to Beaumont, who, indeed, died so early as 1616. It is generally believed that the partnership lasted no longer than from 1608 to 1611, and that the writing of only some dozen out of the entire fifty-five plays was involved in it. Were it not that the very noblest are among these few, which include the *Maid's Tragedy* and *Philaster*, *A King and no King* and the *Knight*

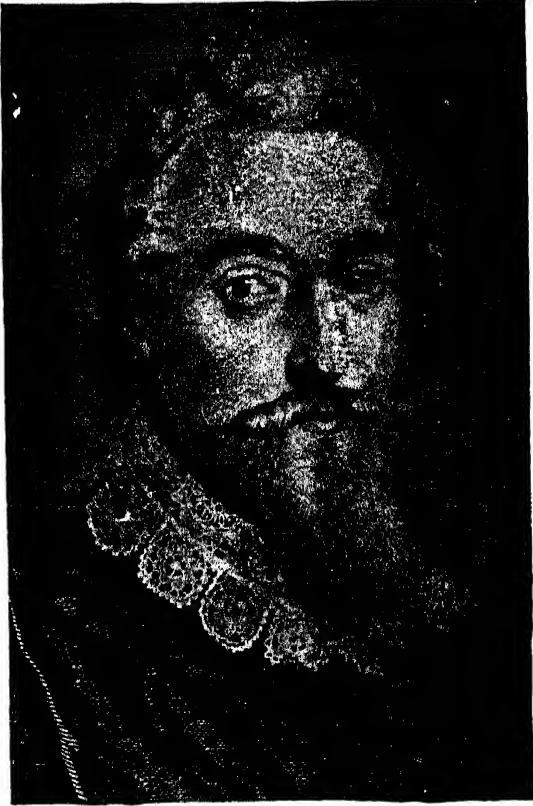


*Beaumont and  
Fletcher*

Frontispiece to Ben Jonson's "Horace"

of the *Burning Pestle*, we might almost disregard the shadowy name of Beaumont, and treat this whole mass of dramatic literature as belonging to Fletcher, who went on writing alone, or with Massinger, until shortly before his death in 1625. The chronological sequence of these dramas, only about ten of which were printed during Fletcher's lifetime, remains the theme of bold and contradictory conjecture.

We have to observe in these glowing and redundant plays a body of lyrico-



Francis Beaumont

*After an engraving by Philip Audinet*

dramatic literature, proceeding directly from and parallel to the models instituted by Shakespeare, and continued for nearly ten years after his death. Nothing else in English is so like Shakespeare as a successful scene from a romantic comedy of Fletcher. Superficially, the language, the verse, the mental attitude often seem absolutely identical, and it is a singular tribute to the genius of the younger poet that he can endure the parallel for a moment. It is only for a moment; if we take Fletcher at his very best—in the ardent and melodious scenes of the *False One*, for instance, where, amid an array of the familiar Roman names, we find him desperately and directly challenging comparison with *Antony and Cleopatra*—we have only to turn from the shadow back to the

substance to see how thin and unreal is this delicately-tinted, hectic, and phantasmal picture of passion by the side of Shakespeare's solid humanity. Jonson has lost the stage because his personages are not human beings, but types of character, built up from without, and vitalised by no specific or personal springs of action. Beaumont and Fletcher are equally dead from the theatrical point of view, but from an opposite cause: their figures have not proved too hard and opaque for perennial interest, but too filmy and undulating; they possess not too much, but too little solidity. They are vague embodiments of instincts, faintly palpitating with desires and emulations and eccentricities, but not built up and set on firm feet by the practical genius of dramatic creation.

Yet no conception of English poetry is complete without a reference to these beautiful, sensuous, incoherent plays. The Alexandrine genius of Beaumont and Fletcher was steeped through and through in beauty; and so quickly did they follow the fresh morning of Elizabethan poetry that their premature sunset was tinged with dewy and "fresh-quilted" hues of dawn. In the short span of their labours they seem to take hold of the entire field of the drama, from birth to death, and Fletcher's quarter of a century helps us to see how rapid and direct was the decline. If the talent of Jonson had been more flexible, if the taste of Fletcher had not been radically so relaxed and luxurious, these two great writers should have carried English drama on after the death of Shakespeare—with less splendour, of course, yet with its character unimpaired. Unfortunately, neither of these excellent men, though all compact with talent, had the peculiar gift opportune to the moment's need, and ten years undid what it had taken ten years to create and ten more to sustain.

Comparatively little has been preserved about the lives of the "great Twin Brethren" of Jacobean drama. **Francis Beaumont** (1584-1616) was one of the sons of the judge of the same name, of Grace Dieu. He entered Pembroke College (Broadgates Hall) early in 1597, and three years later came up to London to study at the Inner Temple. Here he is supposed to have written the rich Ovidian paraphrase of *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus*, published anonymously in 1602. He early engaged the affections of Ben Jonson, who wrote:

How do I love thee, Beaumont, and thy Muse,  
That unto me dost such religion use.

His acquaintance with Fletcher dated from about 1606, from which time until 1611 we are to believe that the two friends constantly collaborated. Beaumont married in 1613, and probably retired to the country. He died in 1616, and was

## The Maids Tragedie.

AS IT HATH BEENE

diuers times Acted at the Black-Friers by  
the Kings Maiesties Seruants.

Newly perused, augmented, and enlarged, This second Impression.



LONDON,

Printed for *Francis Constable*, and are  
to be sold at the White LION in  
Pauls Church-yard. 1611.

Title-page of Beaumont and Fletcher's  
"Maids Tragedie," 1622

buried in Westminster Abbey. His poems were not collected until 1640, when they were carelessly put together with several pieces of dubious authenticity.

**John Fletcher** (1579-1625) was born at Rye, while his father, the future bishop, was the incumbent of that parish. In 1583 the Fletchers removed to Peterborough, and in 1589 to Bristol. The poet was sent in 1591 to Bene't College (Corpus), Cambridge, of which his father had been president: he became "bible-clerk" there in 1593. At this point we lose all sight of him until, about 1606, we find him engaged with Beaumont in the writing of plays. Aubrey has left an

account of their subsequent mode of life: "They lived together, on the Bankside, not far from the playhouse, both bachelors, the same clothes, cloak, &c., between them." Fuller says that on one occasion they were threatened with arrest for high treason, because, while they arranged one of their plots together, one of them shouted out, "I'll kill the King!" They met other poets and actors of the day at the Mermaid Tavern, and Beaumont in a burst of autobiography as rare as it is welcome says:

What things have we  
seen

Done at the Mermaid! heard  
words that have been  
So nimble and so full of subtle  
flame,  
As if that every one from  
whom they came  
Had meant to put his whole  
wit in a jest,  
And had resolved to live a  
fool the rest

Of his dull life; then, when there hath been thrown  
Wit able enough to justify the town  
For three days past—wit that might warrant be  
For the whole city to talk foolishly,  
Till that were cancelled; and, when that was gone,  
We left an air behind us, which alone  
Was able to make the two next companies  
Right witty.



John Fletcher

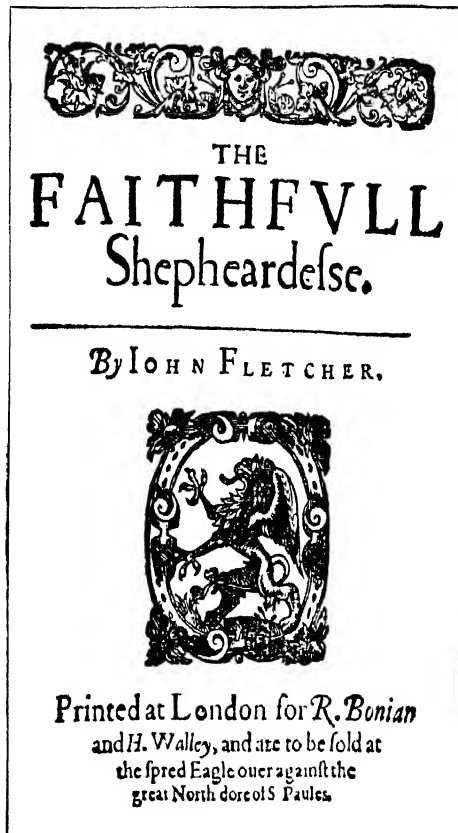
*After the portrait in the National Portrait Gallery*

Fletcher outlived Beaumont by nine years, and died of the plague in London; he was buried in St. Saviour's, Southwark, on August 29, 1625. A great deal of vain investigation has been expended on the dates, authorship, and distribution of the plays attributed to Beaumont and Fletcher. What is actually known is

considerable, and may be thus summarised. Fifty-five plays are extant which are more or less definitely connected with the name of Fletcher and of some collaborator. Of these, *The Woman-Hater* was printed as early as 1607, and *The Faithfull Shepherdesse* about 1610. Then, during the lifetime of Beaumont, were printed three pieces which are admitted to be the joint work of that poet and of Fletcher—these are, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (1613), *Cupid's Revenge* (1615), and *The Scornful Lady*. After Beaumont's death, but during the life of Fletcher, four more quartos were published, all by the joint authors—*A King No King* (1619), *The Maid's Tragedy*, *Philaster* (1620), and *Thierry and Theodoret*. After the death of Fletcher, a play was now and then issued, until in 1647 was published the first folio of Beaumont and Fletcher's *Works*, in which thirty-five new plays were included, but none of those already issued reprinted. These latter, with some others, were included in the second folio of 1679. The general opinion of critics attributes about twenty-seven of the plays to Fletcher alone, who was, quite certainly, the predominant partner; about fourteen to Beaumont and Fletcher in concert; two, *Henry VIII.* and *Two Noble Kinsmen*, to Fletcher and Shakespeare; four or five to Fletcher and Massinger; and the rest to Fletcher in collaboration with Rowley or Shirley or Field or Middleton. A tragi-comedy of *Cardenio*, attributed to Fletcher and Shakespeare, existed in MS.

until the middle of the eighteenth century, when Warburton's cook lighted her kitchen-fire with it. The student should be warned that nowhere in the history of English literature has bibliography tended to run more joyously to riot than in the attribution of Beaumont and Fletcher's plays. Even about the following lovely song, which has been said to be certainly Fletcher's, and yet evidently Shakespeare's, to dogmatise is impossible:

Roses, their sharp spines being gone,  
 Not royal in their smells alone,  
     But in their hue;  
 Maiden-pinks, of odour faint,  
 Daisies smell-less, yet most quaint,  
     And sweet thyme true.



Title-page of "The Faithfull Shepherdesse"

Primrose, eldest child of Ver,  
 Merry spring-time's harbinger,  
     With her bells dim;  
 Oxlips in their cradles growing,  
 Marigolds on death-beds blowing,  
     Larks' heels trim.



John Fletcher

*Engraved portrait in the second edition of Beaumont and Fletcher's Plays*

All, dear Nature's children  
 sweet,  
 Lie 'fore bride and bride-  
 groom's feet,

Blessing their sense!  
 Not an angel of the air,  
 Bird melodious or bird fair,  
     Be absent hence!

The crow, the slanderous  
 cuckoo, nor  
 The boding raven, or  
 chough hoar,

Nor chatting pie,  
 May on our bride-house  
 perch or sing,

Or with them any discord  
 bring,  
     But from it fly!

From "PHILASTER"

*(How the boy Bellario was  
 found)*

I have a boy  
 Sent by the gods, I hope  
 to this intent,  
 Not yet seen in the court;  
 hunting the buck,  
 I found him sitting by a  
 fountain side,  
 Of which he borrow'd some  
 to quench his thirst,  
 And paid the nymph again  
 as much in tears;  
 A garland lay him by,  
 made by himself,  
 Of many several flowers,  
 bred in the bay,  
 Stuck in that mystic order,  
 that the rareness  
 Delighted me: but ever  
 when he turn'd  
 His tender eyes upon 'em,  
 he would weep,  
 As if he meant to make  
 'em grow again.  
 Seeing such pretty helpless  
 innocence

Dwell in his face, I ask'd him all his story;  
 He told me that his parents gentle died,  
 Leaving him to the mercy of the fields,  
 Which gave him roots; and of the crystal springs,

Which did not stop their courses ; and the sun,  
 Which still, he thank'd him, yielded him his light.  
 Then took he up his garland, and did show  
 What every flower, as country people hold,  
 Did signify ; and how all order'd thus,  
 Express'd his grief : and to my thoughts did read  
 The prettiest lecture of his country art  
 That could be wish'd, so that, methought, I could  
 Have studied it. I gladly entertain'd him,  
 Who was as glad to follow, and have got  
 The trustiest, loving'st, and the gentlest boy,  
 That ever master kept ; him will I send  
 To wait on you, and bear our hidden love.

*From "WIT WITHOUT MONEY"*

*(The Humours of a Prodigal Nephew)*

*Lovegood.* But say these means were honest, will they last, sir ?

*Valentine.* Far longer than your jerkin, and wear fairer. . . .

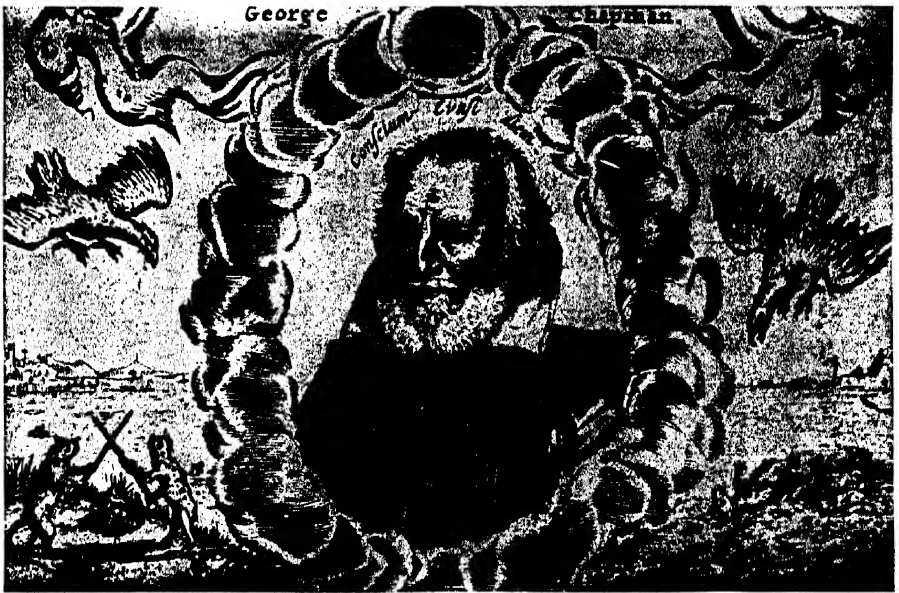
Your mind's enclosed, nothing lies open nobly ;  
 Your very thoughts are hinds, that work on nothing  
 But daily sweat and trouble : were my way  
 So full of dirt as this ('tis true) I'd shift it.  
 Are my acquaintance graziers ? But, sir, know ;  
 No man that I'm allied to in my living,  
 But makes it equal whether his own use  
 Or my necessity pull first ; nor is this forced,  
 But the mere quality and poisure of goodness,  
 And do you think I venture nothing equal ?

*Lovegood.* You pose me, cousin.

*Valentine.* What's my knowledge, uncle ? Is't not worth money ?  
 What's my understanding ? my travel ? reading ? wit ?  
 All these digested ? my daily making men,  
 Some to speak, that too much phlegm had frozen up ;  
 Some other that spoke too much, to hold their peace,  
 And put their tongues to pensions : some to wear their clothes,  
 And some to keep them : these are nothing, uncle ?  
 Besides these ways, to teach the way of nature,  
 A manly love, community to all  
 That are deservers, not examining  
 How much or what's done for them : it is wicked. . . .  
 Are not these ways as honest, as persecuting  
 The starved inheritance with musty corn  
 The very rats were fain to run away from ?  
 Or selling rotten wood by the pound, like spices,  
 Which gentlemen do after burn by the ounces ?  
 Do not I know your way of feeding beasts  
 With grains, and windy stuff, to blow up butchers ?  
 Your racking pastures, that have eaten up,  
 As many singing shepherds, and their issues,  
 As Andalusia breeds ? These are authentic.  
 I tell you, sir, I would not change ways with you ;  
 Unless it were, to sell your state that hour,  
 And (if 'twere possible) to spend it then too ;  
 For all your beans in Ruinillo : now you know me.

The ponderous GEORGE CHAPMAN has a triple claim upon the attention of the student ; he was an ambitious philosophical or gnostic poet, he was the *George Chapman*

author of that valuable translation of Homer which has been mentioned in an earlier chapter, and he was the author, apparently in later middle life, of a cluster of bombastic historical tragedies and loosely articulated romantic comedies which have been admired to excess by thoroughgoing fanatics of the Jacobean drama, but in which, to a common observer, the faults seem vastly to outweigh the rare and partial merits. It is exceedingly difficult in a few words to offer any intelligible judgment on the works of Chapman. His was an austere and an impassioned devotion to the art of poetry. He loved what one of his contemporaries called the "full and heightened style," and his aim in it was dignified ; but even Mr. Swinburne, who has an extreme partiality for Chapman, and has dedicated an entire volume to the analysis



George Chapman

*From the portrait by W. Pass in "The Crowne of all Homer's Workes," 1624*

of his writings, has to admit that "the height indeed is somewhat giddy, and the fulness too often tends or threatens to dilate into tumidity." His prose plays, which are the most readable of Chapman's works, are not satisfactory pieces of stagecraft, and his haughty suspicion of the whole sex of woman is as absurd as it is ungraceful. No one shines so much in quotation, or is seen to so partial an advantage in purple passages as the diffuse, pedantic and convulsive Chapman.

It is supposed that **George Chapman** (d. 1634) was born so early as 1559, and in the neighbourhood of Hitchin. We know little or nothing about his early career, but at the age of about thirty-five he appears in London, actively engaged in literary labour. His earliest production, *The Shadow of Night* (1594), is of an astounding obscurity ; it was followed in 1595 by another "fat and foggy" poem,



*Ovid's Banquet of Sense*, in which, however, some splendid phrases, such as, "the downward-burning flame of her rich hair," and

as still as Vesper's hair  
When not an aspen-leaf is stirred in air,

gave promise of better things. Chapman's earliest known play is *The Blind Beggar of Alexandria* (1598); in the same year, greatly daring, he completed Marlowe's poem of *Hero and Leander*. It is supposed that he was most active as a playwright between 1606 and 1612, during which time he produced *Bussy d'Ambois* and *The Conspiracy of Byron* among tragedies, and *Monsieur d'Olive* and *May-day* among comedies. His magnificent versions of Homer occupied the press at intervals from 1598 to about 1624. The best of Chapman's poems is *The Tears of Peace* (1609), in which occurs the exquisite passage about the robin, the bird

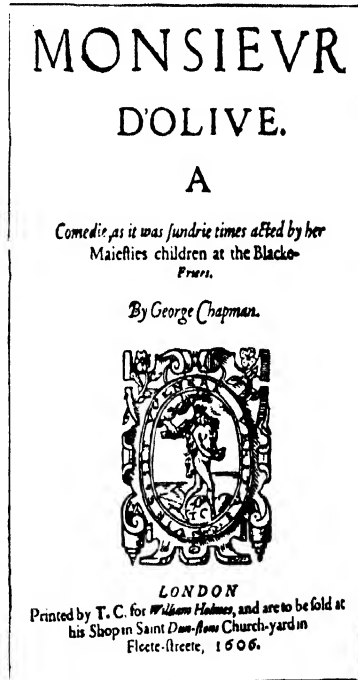
that loves humans best,  
That hath the bugle eyes and rosy breast,  
And is the yellow Autumn's nightingale.

Wood tells us that Chapman was "a person of most reverend aspect, religious and temperate." The following soliloquy, from *Bussy d'Ambois* (1608), gives a very favourable impression of Chapman's ponderous and haughty rhetoric:

What dismal change is here? The good  
old friar  
Is murdered, being made known to serve  
my love.  
Note what he wants! He wants his utmost  
weed,  
He wants his life and body. Which of  
these  
Shall be the want he means, and may  
supply me  
With any fit forewarning? This strange  
vision—  
Together with the dark prediction

Used by the Prince of Darkness that was raised  
By this embodied shadow—stirs my thoughts  
With remission of the spirit's promise,  
Who told me, that, by any invocation  
I should have power to raise him. . . .

Now then, I will claim  
Performance of his free and gentle vow  
To appear in greater light, and make more plain  
His rugged oracle. I long to know  
How my dear mistress fares, and be inform'd  
What hand she now holds on the troubled blood  
Of her incensed lord. Methought the spirit,  
When he had utter'd his perplex'd presage,  
Threw his changed countenance headlong into clouds;



Title-page of George Chapman's  
"Monsieur D'Olive," 1606

His forehead bent, as it would hide his face :  
 He knock'd his chin against his darken'd breast,  
 And struck a churlish silence through his powers.—  
 Terror of Darkness : O thou king of Flames,  
 That with thy music-footed horse dost strike  
 The clear light out of crystal, on dark earth,  
 And hurl'st instructive fire about the world ;  
 Wake, wake the drowsy and enchanted night,  
 That sleeps with dead eyes in this heavy riddle.  
 Or thou, great Prince of Shades, where never sun  
 Sticks his far-darted beams ; whose eyes are made  
 To see in darkness, and see ever best

Where sense is blindest ; open now  
 the heart  
 Of thy abashed oracle, that, for fear  
 Of some ill it includes, would fain  
 lie hid ;  
 And rise thou with it in thy greater  
 light.

Thomas  
 Dekker



Chapman's Tomb in St. Giles' Church

Older than all the other playwrights who will be treated in this chapter, except Chapman, THOMAS DEKKER preserved something of the simplicity of the earlier Elizabethan age. He wrote with great simplicity, and he had the art of transfiguring the little virtues of everyday existence, emphasising their homely values and clothing them with poetic fancy. There is something of the child about Dekker's turns of thought, so pretty, extravagant and touching. It was his desire to

write on paper  
 Made of those turning leaves of heaven, the clouds,  
 Or speak with angels' tongues,

and when he succeeds, it is with an air so delicate and so amusing that criticism has often been disarmed in his presence and has used language concerning him that the general tenor of his work cannot be held to deserve. His early comedies, *The Shoemaker's Holiday* and *Old Fortunatus*, are entertaining and often poetical, but extremely primitive in form, and practice never made Dekker perfect in the art of constructing a play. He rarely, in later years, trusted implicitly to his own skill, and in by far the most powerful works with which his name is connected, *The Honest Whore* and *The Virgin Martyr*, he was aided by better constructors of a play than himself ; nor can we tell how much of what we admire in the first case is due to Middleton,

and in the second to Massinger. In such a tirade as the following, taken from *Old Fortunatus*, we see that the versification and general poetical style of Dekker form an interesting link between the Predecessors and the Successors of Shakespeare :

*Fortunat.* O, whither am I rapt beyond myself ?

More violent conflicts fight in every thought  
Than his whose fatal choice Troy's downfall wrought.

Shall I contract myself to Wisdom's love ?  
Then I lose Riches ; and a wise man poor  
Is like a sacred book that's never read ;  
To himself he lives and to all else seems dead.  
This age thinks better of a gilded fool,  
Than of a threadbare saint in Wisdom's school.  
I will be strong : then I refuse long life ;  
And though mine arm should conquer twenty worlds,

There's a lean fellow beats all conquerors :  
The greatest strength expires with loss of breath,

The mightiest in one minute stoop to death.  
Then take long life, or health ; should I do so,

I might grow ugly, and that tedious scroll  
Of months and years much misery may enroll :  
Therefore I'll beg for beauty ; yet I will not :  
That fairest cheek hath oftentimes a soul  
Leoprous as sin itself, than hell more foul.  
The wisdom of this world is idiotism ;  
Strength a weak reed ; health sickness' enemy,  
And it at length will have the victory.  
Beauty is but a painting ; and long life  
Is a long journey in December gone,  
Tedious and full of tribulation.

Therefore, dread sacred empress, make me rich :  
My choice is store of gold ; the rich are wise :  
He that upon his back rich garments wears  
Is wise, though on his head grow Midas' ears.  
Gold is the strength, the sinews of the world,  
The health, the soul, the beauty most divine ;  
A mask of gold hides all deformities ;  
Gold is heaven's physic, life's restorative ;  
O, therefore make me rich !

The interesting prose of Dekker will be dealt with in the succeeding chapter.

Although the drama in England had turned away decisively from imitation of the Latin tragedies attributed to Seneca, which had so much influence on the European stage, yet in one particular our playwrights were encouraged by the traditions of the *Senecanum opus* to foster a taste for classic horrors. There was a thirst in the English playgoer for terrible pleasures, for wild gusts

For want of me George Chapman for a pastoral  
ending in a Tragedy in part of the  
Annals of the Fall of Troy  
Anne 1599

237 me George Chapman

Facsimile Receipt for 40s. paid for "Pastoral Ending in a Tragedy" from Chapman to Philip Henslowe  
British Museum, MSS. 30262

Melodrama

of emotional excitement, for appeals to the most primitive instincts of revenge and fear. These were generously indulged in the irregular drama of Elizabeth and James, without much consideration of what is called taste; they were indulged grossly and fiercely in plays the very conception of which was disfigured by the violence of crime. It is curious to see with what

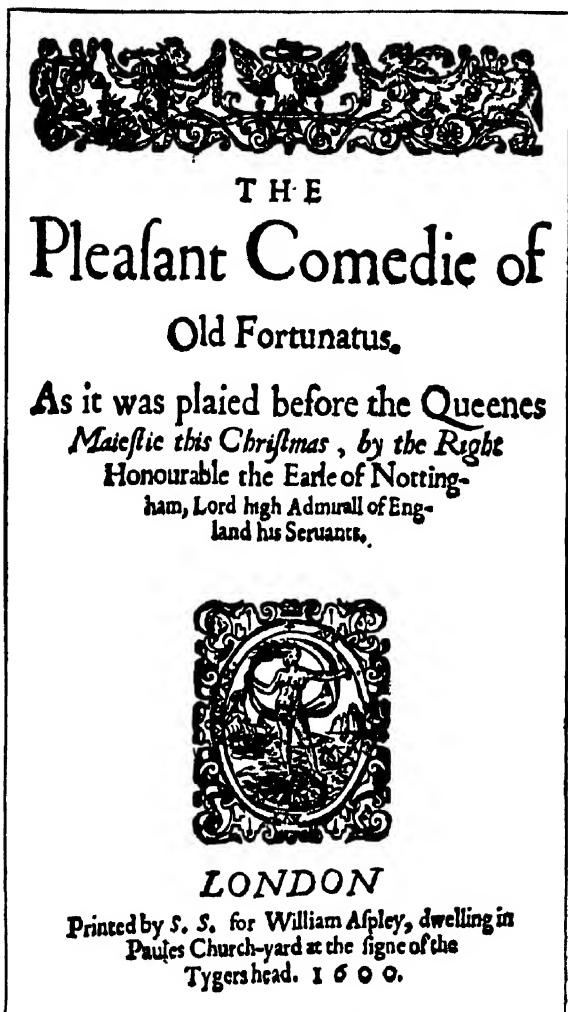
a simplicity this was sometimes done. In the *Two Tragedies in One*, 1600, by Robert Yarrington, a play to which Charles Lamb was the first to call attention, the hero dismembers his victim on the stage in the presence of his sister, to whom he points out the armless and legless trunk, saying:

Hark, Rachael! I will cross  
the water straight,  
And fling this middle men-  
tion of a man  
Into some ditch.

The crudity of this scene seems to exceed that in the *Hippolytus* of Seneca, where Theseus runs over the inventory of his son's fragments, "huc huc reliquias vehiti cari corporis," which has so often been quoted as the last expression of tragical insensibility.

The vehemence of exaggerated force, exhibited in a frenzied pursuit of what are called "strong situations," is a remarkable element in all the minor

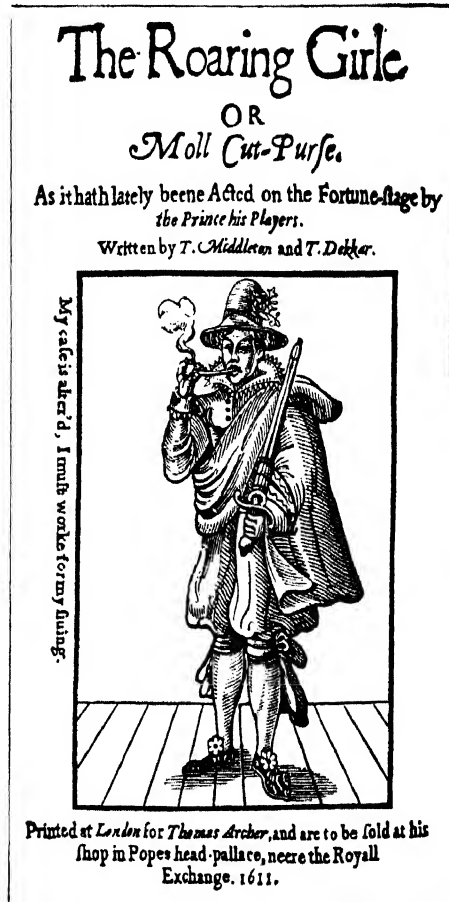
dramatic literature of this age. It is seen in the curious "domestic" tragedies, one of which has just been mentioned, in which familiar crimes of the day, interesting from the moral horror of their circumstances or the cruelty of their incidents, were rehearsed realistically before thrilled and terrified audiences. The dramatist loved to depict the rapid revolutions of the wheel of fortune, to show the assassins of to-day becoming the victims of to-morrow.



Title-page of Dekker's "Pleasant Comedie of Old Fortunatus," 1600

They took from contemporary history or legend themes in which they could plunge their audiences shuddering into the abyss of physical fear. Such tales as they loved to tell have become so rare in modern European chronicle that we were beginning to consider them impossible when the tragedy of Belgrade, in 1903, reminded us of the range of vindictive savagery. The nocturnal murder of Alexander and Draga was an episode, in all its sections, which seemed enacted in order that Tourneur or Chapman should arrange it in vehement blank verse. In the reign of Elizabeth and James a love of blood was kept alive by the frequent spectacle of sudden death. Of the audience of a London play-house the verse might have been recited with which the old Roman tragedy of *Octavia* had closed, "civis gaudet cruore." The more complete a massacre could be, the more hideous in its details, the more pitiless its motives, the readier a Jacobean audience was to welcome its presentment on the stage.

Three writers of distinction stand out pre-eminent among the numerous caterers for this peculiar love of the horrible. In each the instinct of the poet prevailed, during lucid intervals, over the cult of mere agitation and terror; yet all three, if examined not by the light of their occasional passages of illumination and beauty, but in the lurid twilight of their complete works, are seen to be, from the stage point of view, melodramatists of the blood-curdling type, little interested in the sane development of a plot or the determination of shades of character. They are distinguished from one another, not by any difference of aim in their attitude to the stage and the public, but by their poetical equipment. Of the three, by far the greatest is JOHN WEBSTER, greater in some respects than any other English tragic poet except Shakespeare. Webster required but a closer grasp of style and a happier architecture to rank among the leading English poets. *The Duchess of Malfy*, and, in its more rudimentar



Title-page of Dekker and Middleton's  
"Roaring Girl," 1611

form, the earlier *White Devil*, are plays which are distinguished by a marvelous intensity of passion. Webster has so splended a sense of the majesty of death, of the mutability of human pleasures, and of the velocity and weight of destiny, that he rises to conceptions which have an Æschylean dignity; but, unhappily, he grows weary of sustaining them, his ideas of stage-craft are rudimentary and spectacular, and his single well-constructed play, *Appius and Virginia*, has a certain disappointing tameness. Most of the Jacobean dramatists are now read only in extracts, and this test is highly favourable to Webster, who strikes us as a very noble poet driven by the exigencies of fashion to write for a stage, the business of which he had not studied and in which he took no great interest. JOHN MARSTON, whose

versification owes much to Marlowe, was a harsh and strident satirist, a screech-owl among the singing-birds; in the first decade of the seventeenth century he produced a series of vigorous rude tragedies and comedies which possess a character of their own, not sympathetic at all, but unique in its consistent note of caustic melancholy, and often brilliantly written. In CYRIL TOURNEUR the qualities of Marston and Webster are discovered driven to a grotesque excess. In the career of a soldier in the Netherlands fighting against the tyranny of Spain, he had in all probability inured his imagination to all spectacles of cruelty and outrage. He pours out what he remembers upon his dreadful page, and his two lurid tragedies surpass in extravagance of iniquity and profusion of ghastly innuendo all other compositions of their time. Cyril Tourneur is prince of those whose design is "to make our flesh creep," and occasionally he still succeeds.



Moll Cutpurse

From the "Roaring Girl"

John Webster

Of these three poets, probably born about the same time, little biography is preserved. **John Webster** (1575?–1625?) was the son of a London tailor, and was made free of the Merchant Taylors' Company in 1604. Of the dates of his early plays, written in collaboration with Marston, Dekker, and others, little is exactly preserved. His tragedy of *The White Devil*, founded on the adventures of Vittoria Corombona, was acted, perhaps, in 1608, but not printed until 1612. The historical play called *Appius and Virginia*, the comedy of *The Devil's Law-Case*, and the tragedy of *The Duchess of Malfy* were his other dramatic productions. It is said that Webster was clerk of St. Andrew's Holborn, and that he died in 1625.

## FUNERAL DIRGE FOR MARCELLO in "THE WHITE DEVIL"

Call for the robin-redbreast, and the wren,  
 Since o'er shady groves they hover,  
 And with leaves and flowers do cover  
 The friendless bodies of unburied men.  
 Call unto his funeral dole

The ant, the field-mouse,  
 and the mole,  
 To raise him hillocks that  
 shall keep him warm,  
 And (when gay tombs are  
 robb'd) sustain no harm ;  
 But keep the wolf far thence,  
 that's foe to men,  
 For with his nails he'll dig  
 them up again.

From "THE DUCHESS  
 OF MALFY"

*Car.* Hence, villains, ty-  
 rants, murderers : alas !  
 What will you do with my  
 lady ? Call for help.

*Duch.* To whom ? to our  
 next neighbours ? They  
 are mad folks.

*Bosola.* Remove that noise.

*Duch.* Farewell, Cariola. . .  
 I pray thee look thou giv'st  
 my little boy  
 Some syrup for his cold ; and  
 let the girl

Say her prayers ere she sleep.  
 —Now what you please ;  
 What death ?

*Bos.* Strangling. Here are  
 your executioners.

*Duch.* I forgive them.  
 The apoplexy, catarrh, or  
 cough o' the lungs,  
 Would do as much as they do.

*Bos.* Doth not death fright  
 you ?

*Duch.* Who would be  
 afraid on 't,

Knowing to meet such ex-  
 cellent company  
 In the other world ?

*Bos.* Yet, methinks,  
 The manner of your death should much afflict you ;  
 This cord should terrify you.

*Duch.* Not a whit.  
 What would it pleasure me to have my throat cut  
 With diamonds ? or to be smother'd  
 With cassia ? or to be shot to death with pearls ?  
 I know, death hath ten thousand several doors  
 For men to take their exits : and 'tis found

# THE TRAGEDY OF THE DUCHESS Of Malfy.

*As it was Presented priuately, at the Black-  
 Friars; and publicquely at the Globe, By the  
 Kings Maiesties Seruants.*

The perfect and exact Coppy, with diuerse  
*things Printed, that the length of the Play would  
 not beare in the Presentment.*

Written by John Webster.

Horæ. — Si quid —

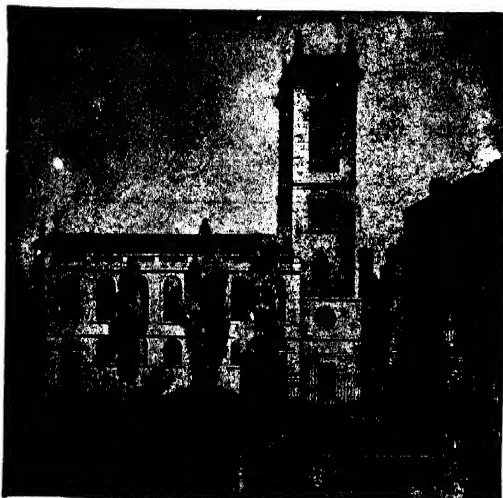
— Candidæ Imperis finem bis æthere metum.

*Jo: gator: . . .*

LONDON

Printed by NICHOLAS ORES, for Iohn  
 WATSON, and are to be sold at the  
 signe of the Crowne, in Pauls  
 Church-yard, 1623.

Title-page of Webster's "Duchess of Malfy," 1623



St. Andrew's Church, Holborn

Serve for mandragora to make me sleep.

Go tell my brothers; when I am laid out,

They then may feed in quiet

*[They strangle her, kneeling.]*

From "THE DEVIL'S LAW-CASE"

*Romelio.* O, my lord, lie not idle :  
The chiefest action for a man of great spirit

Is, never to be out of action. We should think ;

The soul was never put into the body,

Which has so many rare and curious pieces

Of mathematical motion, to stand still.

Virtue is ever sowing of her seeds :

In the trenches for the soldier ; in the wakeful study

For the scholar ; in the furrows of the sea

For men of our profession : of all which

Arise and spring up honour.

*John Marston*

**John Marston** (1575-1634) was born at Coventry in 1575 ; his mother was an Italian. He went up to Brasenose College, Oxford, early in 1592, and took his degree two years later. The earliest works Marston is known to

They go on such strange geometrical hinges,

You may open them both ways ; any way (for heaven's sake)

So I were out of your whispering : tell my brothers,

That I perceive, death (now I'm well awake)

Best gift is, they can give or I can take.

I would fain put off my last woman's fault ;

I'd not be tedious to you. . . .

Pull, and pull strongly, for your able strength

Must pull down heaven upon me.

Yet stay, heaven gates are not so highly arch'd

As princes' palaces ; they that enter there

Must go upon their knees. Come, violent death,

## THE WHITE DIVEL,

OR,

The Tragedy of *Paulo Giordano Urfini*, Duke of *Brachiano*,

With

The Life and Death of *Vittoria Corombona* the famous Venetian Curtizan.

*Asited by the Queenes Maiesties Seruants.*

Written by JOHN WEBSTER.

*Non inferiora secutus.*

LONDON,

Printed by N.O. for Thomas A. Fisher, and are to be sold at his Shop in Popes head Pallace, neere the Royall Exchange, 1612.

Title-page of Webster's "White Divel," 1612



have published are his satires, called *The Scourge of Villany*, and the voluptuous, half-sarcastic romance in six-line stanza, *The Metamorphosis of Pygmalion's Image*, both of 1598. His bitterness of tongue was so great that he was nicknamed "Kinsayder," one who crops or "kinses" the tails of dogs. From 1601 to 1607 he seems to have lived by writing for the stage. His most important pieces are *Antonio and Mellida*, in two parts (1602); *The Malcontent* (1604); *The Dutch Courtezan* (1605); *Parasitaster; or, The Fawn* (1606); and *What You Will* (1607). He entered the Church, long held an incumbency in Hampshire or Wiltshire, and died in the parish of Aldermanbury on June 25, 1634.

THE PROLOGUE TO THE SECOND  
PART OF "ANTONIO AND MELLIDA"  
("ANTONIO'S REVENGE")

The rawish dank of clumsy winter  
ramps  
The fluent summer's vein: and  
drizzling sleet  
Chilleth the wan bleak cheek of the  
numb'd earth,  
Whilst snarling gusts nibble the  
juiceless leaves  
From the naked shuddering branch,  
and pills the skin  
From off the soft and delicate as-  
pects.  
O, now methinks a sullen tragic  
scene  
Would suit the time with pleasing  
congruence!  
May we be happy in our weak  
devoir,  
And all part pleased in most wish'd  
content.  
But sweat of Hercules can ne'er  
beget  
So blest an issue. Therefore we  
proclaim,  
If any spirit breathes within this  
round

Uncapable of weighty passion,

(As from his birth being hugged in the arms  
And nuzzled 'twixt the breasts of Happiness)  
Who winks and shuts his apprehension up  
From common sense of what men were, and are;  
Who would not know what men must be: let such  
Hurry amain from our black-visaged shows;  
We shall affright their eyes. But if a breast,  
Nail'd to the earth with grief; if any heart,  
Pierced through with anguish, pant within this ring:  
If there be any blood, whose heat is choked  
And stifled with true sense of misery:

THE  
HISTORY OF  
Antonio and  
Mellida,

*The first part.*

*As it hathbeene sundry times acted,  
by the children of Paules.*

Written by I. M.

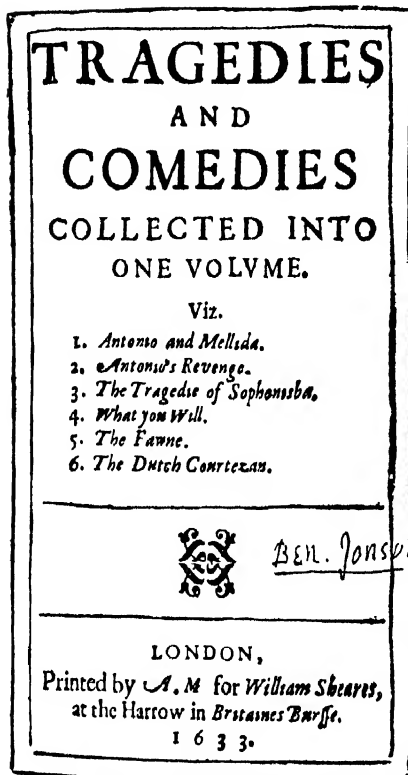


LONDON

Printed for Mathew Loynes, and Thomas Fisher  
are to be sold in Saint Dunstons Church-yard  
1602.

Title-page of Marston's "Antonio and  
Mellida," 1602

If aught of these strains fill this consort up,  
 They arrive most welcome. O, that our power  
 Could lackey or keep wing with our desires ;  
 That with unused poise of style and sense  
 We might weigh massy in judicious scale !  
 Yet here's the prop that doth support our hopes .  
 When our scenes falter, or invention halts,  
 Your favour will give crutches to our faults.



Title-page of Marston's "Tragedies and Comedies," 1633

From Ben Jonson's copy, with his autograph

THE SCHOLAR AND HIS DOG, *from*  
 "WHAT YOU WILL"

I was a scholar seven useful springs  
 Did I deflower in quotations  
 Of cross'd opinions 'bout the soul of man ;  
 The more I learnt, the more I learnt to  
 doubt  
 Delight, my spaniel, slept, whilst I baised  
 (kissed) leaves,  
 Toss'd o'er the dunces, pored on the old  
 print  
 Of titled words and still my spaniel slept  
 Whilst I wasted lamp-oil, barked my flesh,  
 Shrunk up my veins and still my spaniel  
 slept  
 And still I held converse with Zabarell  
 Aquinas, Scotus, and the musty saw  
 Of antique Donate still my spaniel slept.  
 Still on went I, first, *an sit anima*,  
 Then, an it were mortal. O hold, hold ; at  
 that  
 They're at brain-buffets, fell by the ears  
 amain  
 Pell-mell together still my spaniel slept.  
 Then, whether 'twere corporeal, local, fix'd,  
*Ex traduce*, but whether 't had free will  
 Or no, hot philosophers  
 Stood banding factions, all so strongly  
 propp'd,  
 I stagger'd, knew not which was firmer part,  
 But thought, quoted, read, observed, and  
 pryed,  
 Stuff'd noting-books and still my spaniel  
 slept

At length he waked, and yawn'd, and by yon sky,  
 For aught I know he knew as much as I

Cyril Tour-  
 neur

It is believed that Cyril Tournour (1575 ?–1626) was the son of Richard Tournour, Governor of the Brill in Holland. Much of his life was probably spent in service in the Netherlands. In 1600 was published his outrageously metaphysical and obscure poem, *The Transform'd Metamorphosis*. His earliest play, *The Revenger's Tragedy*, was printed in 1607, and *The Atheist's Tragedy* in 1611. A third, *The Nobleman*, was licensed in 1612, but has been lost. Cyril Tournour acted as the secretary of Sir Edward Cecil in the Cadiz expedition of 1625, and was among those disbanded soldiers who were put ashore at Kinsale on the return of the fleet. He was already ill, and he died in Ireland, in utter destitution, on February 28, 1626.

*From "THE REVENGER'S TRAGEDY"*

Here's an eye

Able to tempt a great man—to serve God ;  
 A pretty hanging lip, that has forgot now to dissemble.  
 Methinks this mouth should make a swearer tremble ;  
 A drunkard clasp his teeth, and not undo 'em,  
 To suffer wet damnation to run through 'em.  
 Here's a cheek keeps her colour let the wind go whistle ;  
 Spout rain, we fear thee not : be hot or cold,  
 All's one with us : and is not he absurd,  
 Whose fortunes are upon their faces set,  
 That fear no other God but wind and wet ?

Does the silkworm expend her yellow labours

For thee ? for thee does she undo herself ?  
 Are lordships sold to maintain ladyships,  
 For the poor benefit of a bewitching minute ?

Why does yon fellow falsify highways,  
 And put his life between the judge's lips,  
 To refine such a thing ? keep his horse and men,

To beat their valours for her ?  
 Surely we're all mad people, and they  
 Whom we think are, are not.

Does every proud and self-affecting dame  
 Camphire her face for this ? and grieve her Maker

In sinful baths of milk, when many an infant starves,

For her superfluous outside, for all this ?  
 Who now bids twenty pound a night ?  
 prepares

Music, perfumes, and sweetmeats ? all are hush'd.

Thou mayst lie chaste now ! it were fine, methinks,

To have thee seen at revels, forgetful feasts,  
 And unclean brothels : sure 'twould fright the sinner,

And make him a good coward : put a reveller

Out of his antick amble,

And cloy an epicure with empty dishes.

Here might a scornful and ambitious woman  
 Look through and through herself.—See, ladies, with false forms  
 You deceive men, but cannot deceive worms.

*From "THE ATHEIST'S TRAGEDY"*

Walking upon the fatal shore,  
 Among the slaughter'd bodies of their men,  
 Which the full-stomach'd sea had cast upon  
 The sands, it was my unhappy chance to light  
 Upon a face, whose favour when it lived  
 My astonish'd mind inform'd me I had seen.  
 He lay in his armour, as if that had been  
 His coffin ; and the weeping sea (like one

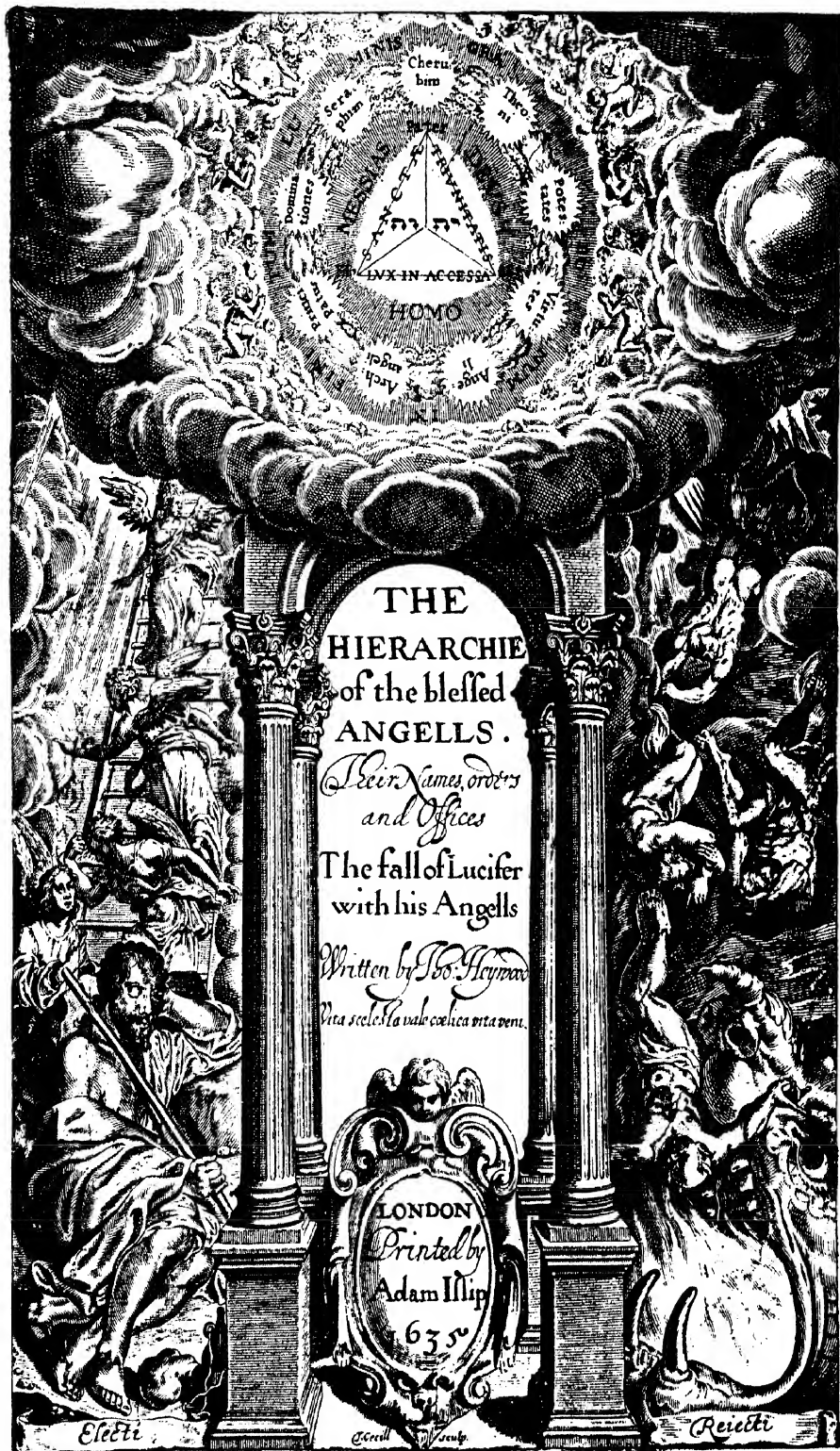
# THE REVENGERS TRAGÆDIE.

*As it hath bene sundry times Acted,  
by the Kings Maiesties  
Seruants.*



AT LONDON  
 Printed by G. E. u. and are to be sold at his  
 house in Fleete-lane at the signe of the  
 Printers-Presse.  
 1607.

Title-page of Cyril Tournear's "The  
 Revenger's Tragedy," 1607



Title-page of Heywood's "Hierarchy of the Blessed Angels," 1635

Whose milder temper doth lament the death  
Of him whom in his rage he slew) runs up  
The shore, embraces him, kisses his cheek ;  
Goes back again, and forces up the sands  
To bury him ; and every time it parts,  
Sheds tears upon him ; till at last (as if  
It could no longer endure to see the man

Whom it had slain, yet loath  
to leave him) with  
A kind of unresolved unwilling  
pace,  
Winding her waves one in  
another (like  
A man that folds his arms, or  
wrings his hands,  
For grief) ebb'd from the  
body, and descends ;  
As if it would sink down into  
the earth,  
And hide itself for shame of  
such a deed.

The one fact about THOMAS HEYWOOD which is universally known is that Charles Lamb called him "a sort of prose Shakespeare." This genial expression, divorced from its context, has been a stumbling-block to many readers who have turned to *A Challenge for Beauty* or to *The Fair Maid of the Exchange*, and have been disappointed to meet there with some beauty, indeed, but with slovenly qualities the reverse of Shakespearean. But Lamb's too-telling phrase should not be quoted alone ; it is true that he was carried away

by the enthusiasm of the discoverer so far as to say that Heywood's "scenes are to the full as natural and affecting" as Shakespeare's ; yet he immediately qualified this excess of praise by adding, "but we miss *the Poet*, that which in Shakespeare always appears out of and above the surface of the nature. Heywood's characters, his country gentlemen, and so on, are exactly what we see, but of the best kind of what we see, in life." These words excellently indicate the tendency of this dramatist, whose merit lies not in the intensity and splendour of his fancy, or in his power over terror and pain, but in his

THE PRINCIPAL



Thomas  
Heywood

Allegorical plate from the "Hierarchy of the Blessed Angels," with portraits of Charles I. and his Family

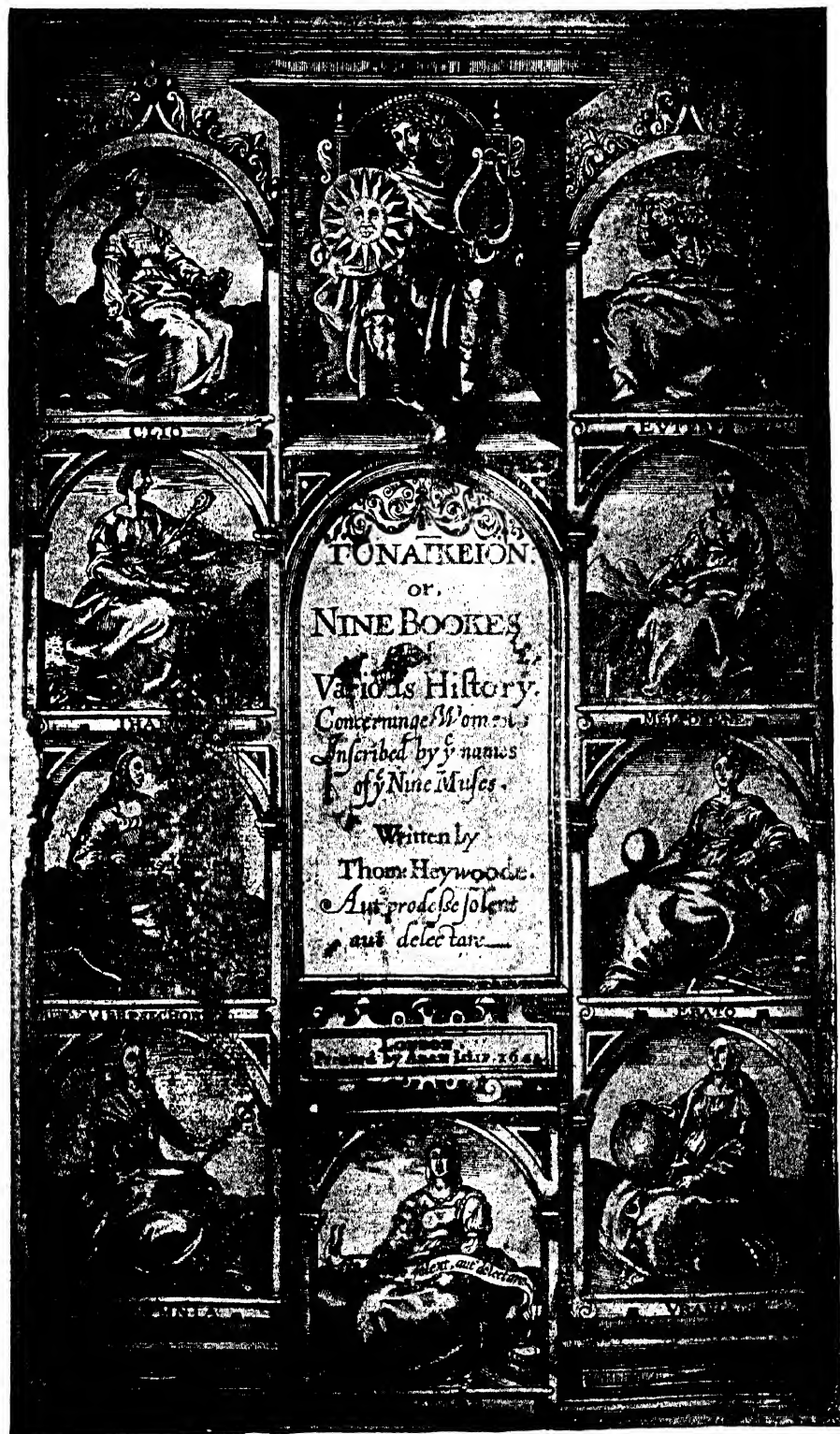
humane simplicity. Nowhere in the Jacobean age do we seem to come so close to the ordinary conversation of the day, unrevised and unadorned. What Heywood lacks is distinction; he is content to be an indefatigable hackney writer, incessantly and without ambition engaged in amusing and awakening his contemporaries. The people whom Heywood collects before us in such plays as *A Woman Killed with Kindness* and *The English Traveller* are natural and, even in their errors, amiable. He does not deal in heroes and monsters, like so many of his fellow playwrights. In them a violence is notable, an uplifting of the whole soul in arms to resist fate and to perish, if necessary, in the struggle. But Heywood's gentle talent does not strive or cry; he loves to depict submission, reconciliations, facile intrigues which are "very delectable and full of mirth." Besides the domestic plays by which this poet is best known, he wrote a considerable number of classical entertainments, half serious dramas, half burlesques, ingenious and extraordinary, of which *The Rape of Lucrece* is the type, and a mass of pseudo-philosophical verse, garrulous and prosy, the most curious specimen of which is *The Hierarchy of the Blessed Angels*, a sort of analysis of the universe, visible and invisible.

It is probable that **Thomas Heywood** was born about 1575 in Lincolnshire. He was educated at Cambridge, and became a fellow of Peterhouse. During his residence at the University he became deeply interested in the stage, and doubtless contributed to the "tragedies, comedies, histories, pastorals, and shows" which he tells us were acted in his time by "graduates of good place." In 1596 he came to London and wrote a play for the Lord Admiral's Company, to which in 1598 we find him regularly attached as an actor. Of the dramas which he composed at this time, *The Four Prentices of London* is probably the only one which survives. We have, however, a series of tame chronicle-plays which seem to date from 1600. Heywood's masterpiece, *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, was produced in 1602 (printed in 1607). In the very interesting preface to *The English Traveller*, which was not published until 1633, Heywood tells us that this tragedy-comedy is but "one reserved amongst two hundred and twenty, in which I have had either an entire hand or at the least a main finger." Even at that date, many of these plays had "been negligently lost," and Heywood adds that "it never was any great ambition in me to be in this kind volumuously read." Of his vast body of dramatic writing, therefore, we may be surprised that so many as twenty-four complete plays have come down to us. Of his more ambitious, but less successful, non-dramatic works, *Troja Britanmica* was published in 1609, *Gunaikeion, or, Nine Books Concerning Women* in 1624, and *The Hierarchy of the Blessed Angels* in 1635. He disappears after 1641.

From "THE ENGLISH TRAVELLER"

(A Carousal)

Young Geraldine	This gentleman and I
Pass'd but just now by your next neighbour's house,	
Where, as they say, dwells one young Lionel,	
Wincott An unthrift youth . his father now at sea.	
Young Ger . . . There this night	



Title-page of Heywood's "Gunaikeion," 1524

Was a great feast. . . .  
 In the height of their carousing, all their brains  
 Warm'd with the heat of wine, discourse was offer'd  
 Of ships and storms at sea · when suddenly,  
 Out of his giddy wildness, one conceives  
 The room wherein they quaff'd to be a pinnacle,  
 Moving and floating, and the confused noise  
 To be the murmuring winds, gusts, mariners ;  
 That their unsteadfast footing did proceed  
 From rocking of the vessel . this conceived,  
 Each one begins to apprehend the danger,  
 And to look out for safety. Fly, saith one,  
 Up to the main top, and discover He  
 Climbs by the bed-post to the tester, there  
 Reports a turbulent sea and tempest towards ;  
 And wills them, if they'll save their ship and lives,  
 To cast their lading overboard At this  
 All fall to work, and hoist into the street,  
 As to the sea, what next came to their hand,  
 Stools, tables, tressels, trenchers, bedstrads, cups,  
 Pots, plate, and glasses Here a fellow whistles ,  
 They take him for the boatswain one lies struggling  
 Upon the floor, as if he swam for life  
 A third takes the base-viol for the cock-boat,  
 Sits in the belly on 't, labours, and rows ,  
 His oar, the stick with which the fiddler play'd ;  
 A fourth bestrides his fellow, thinking to 'scape  
 (As did Arion) on the dolphin's back,  
 Still fumbling on a gittern ——The rude multitude,  
 Watching without, and gaping for the spoil  
 Cast from the windows, went by the ears about it ;  
 The constable is called to atone the broil ;  
 Which done, and hearing such a noise within  
 Of eminent shipwreck, enters the house, and finds them  
 In this confusion . they adore his staff,  
 And think it Neptune's trident , and that he  
 Comes with his Tritons (so they call'd his watch)  
 To calm the tempest and appease the waves :  
 And at this point we left them.

*From "THE BRAZEN AGE" (1613)*

*(Phæbus speaks)*

Sometimes I cast my eye upon the sea,  
 To see the tumbling seal or porpoise play.  
 There see I merchants trading, and their sails  
 Big-bellied with the wind , sea-fights sometimes  
 Rise with their smoke-thick clouds to dark my beams ;  
 Sometimes I fix my face upon the earth,  
 With my warm fervour to give metals, trees,  
 Herbs, plants, and flowers, life. Here in gardens walk  
 Loose ladies with their lovers arm in arm.  
 Yonder the labouring ploughman drives his team.  
 Further I may behold main battles pitch'd ;  
 And whom I favour most (by the wind's help)  
 I can assist with my transparent rays.  
 Here spy I cattle feeding ; forests there  
 Stored with wild beasts ; here shepherds with their lasses,



Piping beneath the trees while their flocks graze.  
 In cities I see trading, walking, bargaining,  
 Buying and selling, goodness, badness, all things—  
 And shine alike on all. . . .  
 No emperor walks forth, but I see his state ;  
 Nor sports, but I his pastimes can behold.  
 I see all coronations, funerals,  
 Marts, fairs, assemblies, pageants, sights and shows.  
 No hunting, but I better see the chase  
 Than they that rouse the game. What see not I ?  
 There's not a window, but my beams break in ;  
 No chink or cranny, but my rays pierce through ;  
 And there I see, O Vulcan, wondrous things :  
 Things that thyself, nor any god besides,  
 Would give belief to.

There is no body of writing in which the faults and the merits of the Jacobean age can be studied to more advantage than in the breathless and agitated plays of THOMAS MIDDLETON. Thomas Middleton

Here all that is inconsistent, all qualities that are incompatible, are jumbled together in the strangest confusion. Here we have a brazen indelicacy married to an almost feminine susceptibility to natural and verbal beauty; Romance, in its most preposterous forms, running side by side with a plain domestic realism; a capacity for the most thrilling revelations of the inmost secrets of the heart combined with an absence of all skill in portraiture, and the dullest acceptance of ethical caricature. It is impossible to find any general terms in which to describe the style and temper of Middleton, since what is true of one page is utterly false of the next. As a dramatist, pure and simple, however, this may be said that his extraordinary fluency and picturesqueness alternately



Thomas Middleton

*From the frontispiece to the "Two New Plays" of 1657*

support and betray him, so that the impression of life, of bustling and crowded vitality, which he hardly ever fails to produce, is now seductive and now wearying or even repulsive, according as the cleverness of the playwright wanes or waxes, that "indefatigable ingenuity" of which Mr. Swinburne so justly speaks being too often wasted upon obscure and ill-digested themes accepted too hastily by a rash and unbalanced judgment. At his best—in the character of De Flores in *The Changeling*, in the tragic pathos of *A Fair Quarrel*, in much of the graceful intrigue of *The Spanish Gypsy*—the poetic spirit of Middleton is prodigal in its manifestations. But the mention of these very noble dramas reminds us of another fact, which

adds to our difficulty in exacting apprising or even analysing his genius. In all his best works we are left to conjecture what portions are really his, and what are due to the collaboration of a poet even more shadowy than himself, WILLIAM ROWLEY. These two are inextricably mingled, and what is further puzzling is that such plays as seem to be entirely written by the one or the other do not display such characteristics of individual style as greatly aid us in distinguishing them. But *A Game of Chess* is supposed to display the solitary Middleton and *A Match at Midnight* the unaided Rowley, and of



Title-page of Middleton's "Game at Chess," 1624

these we may make what we can. Each of these dramatists combined, too, with Dekker, and the confusion of their styles is past all hope of unravelling. Middleton seems, however, to have been the more mellifluous versifier, the more conscious poet, of the two; and Rowley the more sturdy and more strenuous painter of character. Little, however, can be said with confidence, and Middleton and Rowley must be content to live together, inextricably intertwined, like Beaumont and Fletcher.

It has been supposed that **Thomas Middleton** (1570?–1627) was born in London; his father was a gentleman of that city. The poet was admitted a member of Gray's Inn in 1593, having already, as is believed, begun to write for the stage. His earliest surviving independent play is *Blurt, Master Constable*, printed in 1602. Middleton is the author, or part author, of about twenty-three plays which are still in existence, and we have no reason to suppose that we possess more than a fragment of the work which he poured forth with a careless volubility. Of the best known of his plays a list may here be given, with the dates of publication: *Michaelmas Term* (1607), *A Trick to Catch the Old One* (1608), *A Fair Quarrel* (1617), *The Changeling* (1653—acted 1624), *The Spanish Gipsy* (1653), *Woman Beware Women* (1657). In 1620 Middleton was appointed City Chronologer, and in 1623 was living at Newington Butts. In 1624 he produced a political and patriotic drama, *A Game of Chess*, which was successful beyond all precedent, but was so offensive to the Spanish Ambassador that he complained to King

James, and poet and actors were sharply reprimanded and fined. Middleton died at Newington, where he was buried on July 4, 1627. Jonson called him "a base fellow," but it is not known what grounds he had for this charge. Another contemporary says, on the other hand :

Facetious Middleton, thy witty muse  
Hath pleased all that books or men peruse ;  
If any thee despise, he doth but show  
Antipathy to wit in daring so ;  
Thy fame's above his malice, and 'twill be  
Dispraise enough for him to censure thee.

Of **William Rowley** scarcely a single personal fact is known, except that he was an actor in several companies from about 1607 to 1627. It has been conjectured that he lived on until 1642. The chief plays in which he was unassisted are *A New Wonder* (1632), *A Match at Midnight* (1633), and *A Shoemaker a Gentleman* (1638).

From "BLURT, MASTER  
CONSTABLE "

Ah ! how can I sleep ? He,  
who truly loves,  
Burns out the day in idle  
fantasies ;  
And when the lamb bleating  
doth bid good-night  
Unto the closing day, then  
tears begin  
To keep quick time unto the  
owl, whose voice  
Shrieks like the bellman in  
the lover's ears :  
Love's eye the jewel of sleep,  
O ! seldom wears  
The early lark is waken'd  
from her bed,  
Being only by love's plaints  
disquieted ;

And singing in the morning's ear she weeps,  
Being deep in love, at lovers' broken sleeps.  
But say a golden slumber chance to tie  
With silken strings the cover of love's eye ;  
Then dreams, magician-like, mocking present  
Pleasures, whose fading leaves more discontent,

## A Faire Quarrell.

With new Additions of Mr. *Chaught* and  
*Trimtram* Roaring, and the Bauds Song.  
*Never before Printed.*

*As it was Acted before the King, by the Prince  
his Highnesse Seruants.*

{ Written by *Thomas Middleton*, } Gent.  
{ and *William Rowley*. }

*William  
Rowley*



Printed at London for J. T. and are to be sold at Christ  
Church Gate. 1617.

Title-page of Middleton and Rowley's  
"Fair Quarrel," 1617

THE PRELUDE TO THE DUEL *in* "A FAIR QUARREL"*Enter COLONEL and his two Friends.**1st Friend.* He's come; do you but draw: we'll fight it for you.*Captain.* I know too much to grant that.*1st Friend.* O dead manhood!

Had ever such a cause so faint a servant?

Shame brand me if I do not suffer for him.

*Colonel.* I've heard, sir, you've been guilty of much boasting  
For your brave earliness at such a meeting.

You've lost the glory of that way this morning:

I was the first to-day.

*Capt.* So were you ever  
In my respect, sir.

A NEVV  
WONDER,  
A  
WOMAN  
NEVER VEX T.

~  
PLEASANT CONCEITED  
Comedy: sundry times Acted:  
never before printed.

Written by WILLIAM ROWLEY, one  
of his Majesties Servants.

---

LONDON,  
Imprinted by G. P. for I. Iamie's Cause, and are to be sold  
at his Shop at the signe of the Crowe in Saint Pauls  
Church-yard, 1632.

Title-page of "A New Wonder, a  
Woman Never Vexed," 1632

But when I call to memory our long friendship,  
Methinks it cannot be too great a wrong  
That then I should not pardon. Why should man  
For a poor hasty syllable or two  
(And vented only in forgetful fury)  
Chain all the hopes and riches of his soul  
To the revenge of that? die lost for ever?  
For he that makes his last peace with his Maker  
In anger, anger is his peace eternally:  
He must expect the same return again,  
Whose venture is deceitful. Must he not, sir?  
*Col.* I see what I must do, fairly put up again,  
For here 'll be nothing done, I perceive that.  
*Capt.* What shall be done in such a worthless business

*1st Friend.* O most base præludium*Capt.* I never thought on victory our  
mistressWith greater reverence than I have your  
worth,

Nor ever loved her better.

Success in you has been my absolute joy,  
And when I've wish'd content I've wish'd  
your friendship.*Col.* I came not hither, sir, for an en-  
comium.

I came provided

For storms and tempests, and the foulest  
seasonThat ever rage let forth, or blew in wildness,  
From the incensed prison of man's blood.*Capt.* 'Tis otherwise with me: I come  
with mildness,Peace, constant amity, and calm forgiveness,  
The weather of a Christian and a friend.*1st Friend.* Give me a valiant Turk,  
though not worth tenpence.*Capt.* Yet, sir, the world will judge the  
injury mine,

Insufferable mine, mine beyond injury.

Thousands have made a less wrong reach to  
hell,Ay and rejoiced in his most endless ven-  
geance

(A miserable triumph though a just one)

But to be sorry and to be forgiven ?

You, sir, to bring repentance ; and I pardon.

*Col.* I bring repentance, sir ?

*Capt.* If't be too much

To say, repentance ; call it what you please, sir,  
Choose your own word ; I know you're sorry for it  
And that's as good.

*Col.* I sorry ? by fame's honour, I am wrong'd :  
Do you seek for peace and draw the quarrel larger ?

*Capt.* Then 'tis I'm sorry that I thought you so.

*1st Friend.* A captain ! I could gnaw his title off.

*Capt.* Nor is it any misbecoming virtue, sir,  
In the best manliness, to repent a wrong :

Which made me bold with you.

*1st Friend.* I could cuff his head off.

*2nd Friend.* Nay, pish.

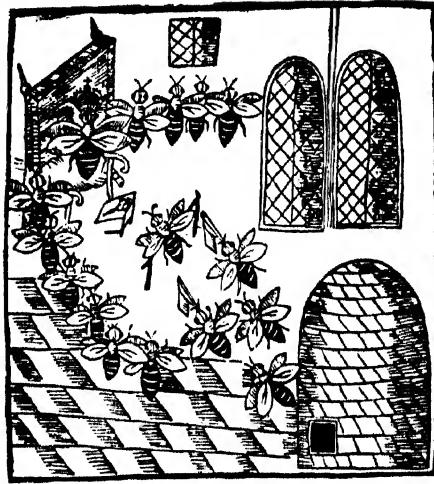
*Col.* So once again take thou thy  
peaceful rest then ; [*To his sword.*  
But as I put thee up, I must proclaim  
This captain here, both to his friends  
and mine,  
That only came to see fair valour  
righted,  
A base submissive coward : so I leave  
him.

*Capt.* O, Heaven has pitied my ex-  
cessive patience,  
And sent me a cause : now I have a  
cause :

A coward I was never.—Come you  
back, sir.

Of many of the Jacobean dra-  
matists so large a portion of their  
work is lost that we run the risk of  
misjudging what was the general  
character of that work. We are apt  
to take for granted that a remark-  
able specimen which has survived

is typical of what its author wrote, when, perhaps, if we knew more, we  
should see that it was entirely exceptional. This is perhaps the case with  
JOHN DAY, who was a very prolific dramatist, of whose innumerable pieces  
only six survive. Of these, the rhymed masque of *The Parliament of  
Bees* is so predominant in charm, that we have come to think of Day as a  
writer standing alone in the loud Jacobean market-place, presenting none  
but delicate and fantastic wares of exquisite lyrical workmanship. But  
Day's other dramas, although not one is without evidence of a sweetness and  
amenity of disposition peculiar to this author, are not strikingly dissimilar  
from those of others, as in particular of Fletcher, whom Day imitated in his  
intrigue, and of Dekker. At a somewhat later date, THOMAS NABBES pro-  
duced a moral masque of *Microcosmus*, which stands out among his gentle  
and somewhat ineffectual writings in a prominent way. It is well to observe



**T**He Parliament is held, Bills and Complaints  
Heard and reform'd, with severall restraints  
Of usurpt freedom; instituted Law  
To keepe the Common Wealth of Bees in awe

Woodcut illustration from John Day's  
"Parliament of Bees," 1641

that the true Elizabethan sweetness of fancy, a perfume of the Heliconian honey, still lingered about English drama long after the elements of the playhouse had become realistic and mundane; there was still something of childhood about stage-poetry, although it had grown so adult and rough.

It is possible that **John Day** was born about 1575; he was educated, from 1592 onwards, at Caius College, Cambridge. The earliest record of his theatrical career which has come down to us is an entry in Henslowe's *Diary* of 1599, showing that he was then already an actor-playwright. All his early plays are lost, except *The Blind Beggar of Bethnal Green* (1600). His *Parliament of Bees* was acted, and perhaps printed, in 1607, but the earliest edition extant is of 1641. Of his ordinary plays, the most lively is *The Isle of Gulls*, printed in 1606. Day died in or about the year 1640. **Thomas Nabbes** is thought to have been born at Worcester. His comedy of *Covent Garden* was acted in 1632. The most graceful of Nabbes' writings, his *Microcosmus*, appeared in 1637, and another masque, *The Spring's Glory*, in 1638, after which date Nabbes disappears.

From "THE PARLIAMENT OF BEES"

*Oberon.* A female bee! thy character?

*Flora* Flora, Oberon's gardener,  
Huswife both of herbs and flowers,  
To strew thy shrine, and trim thy bowers,  
With violets, roses, eglantine,  
Daffadown, and blue columbine,  
Hath forth the bosom of the spring  
Pluck'd this nosegay, which I bring  
From Eleusis (mine own shrine)  
To thee, a monarch all divine,  
And, as true impost of my grove,  
Present it to great Oberon's love,

*Oberon.* Honey-dews refresh thy meads;  
Cowslips spring with golden heads;  
July-flowers and carnations wear  
Leaves double-streak'd, with maiden-hair;  
May thy lilies taller grow,  
Thy violets fuller sweetness owe;  
And last of all, may Phœbus love  
To kiss thee; and frequent thy grove,  
As thou in service true shalt be  
Unto our crown and royalty.

*Philip  
Massinger*

When we reach the work of PHILIP MASSINGER, we are already conscious that English drama has begun to hasten upon its downward course. What the glorious example of Shakespeare could not give it, it failed to receive from the learning and enthusiasm of Jonson, and after this point almost every accident was damaging. One blow after another weakened and distracted it; almost year by year, and with a sinister rapidity, it sank into desuetude. The retirement of Shakespeare and the death of Beaumont placed tragedy and romantic comedy mainly in the lax hands of Fletcher, who for some eight years more poured forth his magnanimous and sunshiny plays, so musical, so dissolute, so fantastic. Then to the wearied Fletcher is added the young, skilful and earnest talent of Massinger, who, about 1624,

is found taking his place as the most active and popular dramatic poet of the hour. As the flood of unequal, hurried plays by the minor survivors of an earlier generation begins to slacken, Massinger for a while practically holds the field. In many respects his talent was an admirable one, and the criticism which treats Massinger with contempt is led astray by comparing him at disadvantageous points with his most brilliant predecessors.

It is, however, impossible to study Massinger without ejaculating "The glory is departing." He writes with vigour, but he never attains to the impetus of Fletcher; his

versification is tamer than any which we have yet met with since the great revival; his construction is prosier, without gaining coherency. One signal merit of Massinger is his serious and solid conception of duty and responsibility, but we have, in exchange for his moral gravity, to resign ourselves to the loss of all fire and colour. It is not to the sober author of *The Bondman* and *The City Madam* that we come for the tumultuous ecstasy which carried Webster and Middleton on its wings. But we must not seek for intensity or passion in Massinger's pages. He was essentially a writer for the public stage and for large popular audiences. His aim seems to have been to win



Philip Massinger

*After the frontispiece to his plays*

these last back to the theatre by abandoning the over-lyrical and over-fantastic elements which the poets had introduced. Massinger knew that it is not by extravagant and obscure appeals to the imagination that the idle public is to be amused after its dinner. He sat down to produce prosaic, decorous, interesting pieces—tragedies not remarkable for stateliness, comedies from which humour is almost absent—which should possess decorum of movement, variety of interest, and that "equability of all the passions" which the public mind was beginning to crave after the violence of those appeals which two generations of poets had made upon it in their ecstasy.

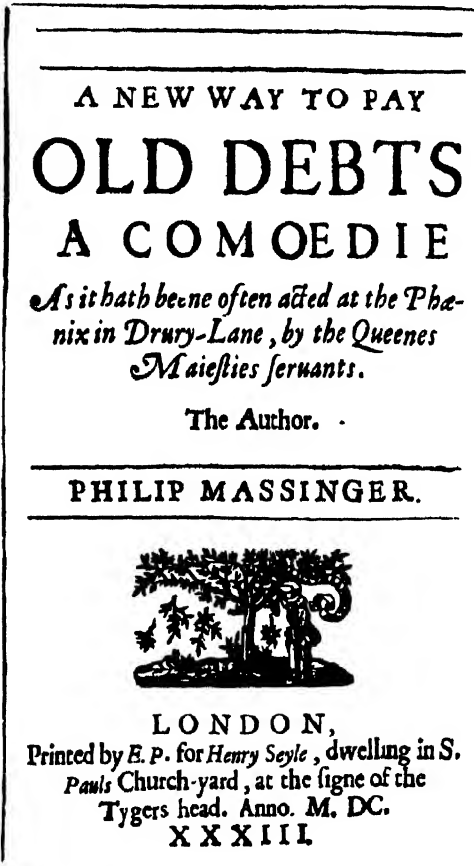
In Massinger there existed an element which has become inappreciable to us, but which greatly added to his power and popularity in his own time.

This was the courage with which he adapted his art to the illustration of current political and social events. To us *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* is merely a very well-constructed comedy; to Massinger's contemporaries it was a solemn, almost a religious satire on those monopolists who, like the execrated Sir Giles Mompessen, were the scourge of the poor and of the middle classes. In *The Great Duke of Florence* we read an agreeable and genial

tragi-comedy; to Massinger's audience it was a comment, playful and bold, on that stirring event of the hour, Buckingham's expedition to the island of Rhé. A lost play, *The King and the Subject*, contained a criticism of ship-money so direct that it brought down upon the playwright the sovereign's displeasure; "this is too insolent," said Charles I., "and must be changed." The ideals of political and personal virtue in the mind of Massinger were very high. Unfortunately, as his portrait testifies, there was an element of weakness in him, and he stooped to the low tastes of the vulgar minds whom it was his business to amuse. As Gardiner has acutely noted, "in vain he sought to still the remonstrances of his conscience by arguing that the mere representation of evil conveyed a reproof." This was not the spirit in which the real opponents of public indelicacy, such as Prynne, in that "scourge of stage-

players," his snarling *Histrionastix* of 1632, found it effective to appeal to the scared consciences of English pleasure-seekers.

Less than the customary uncertainty hangs over the career of **Philip Massinger** (1583-1638). He was the son of Arthur Massinger, a gentleman who "happily spent many years, and died" in the service of the Earls of Pembroke. The poet was born at Salisbury, where he was baptized on November 24, 1583. There is an impression that he was page to the Countess; but on May 14, 1602, he was entered as a commoner of St. Alban Hall, Oxford. The Earl of Pembroke paid his college expenses during the four years he was at the University, and was displeased to find that he "gave his mind more to poetry and romances than to



Title-page of "A New Way to Pay Old Debts," 1633



logic and philosophy, which he ought to have done." In 1606 he came up to London, and "betook himself to writing plays," but we are left very much in

To my Honorable friend &  
 Francis Foljambe Esqre  
 and Baronet.

W<sup>th</sup> my service I present this booke  
 a trifle & trifling, but pray you looke  
 upon the Sender, not the gift, w<sup>th</sup> your  
 accustomed favor, and then it will indure  
 your steepe, the better. Some thing here may bee  
 you'll finde in the persall fit for mee  
 to give to one of honor, and may please  
 in your defense, though you desire to send  
 a sample of this nature. may it please  
 in your fat indgement, though not now, yet  
 yet fit to finde a pardon, and I'll say  
 upon your warrant that it is a play

ever at your command

Philip Massinger

Facsimile Letter from Massinger to Sir Francis Foljambe

the dark as to the exact nature of his lost productions during the first fifteen years of his authorship. A *Very Woman*, however, we know to have been acted at Court in 1621. Of the very fine play called *The Virgin Martyr*, the greater

part is probably Dekker's, but *The Duke of Milan* (1623) is certainly entirely the work of Massinger. *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* must have been acted about the same time, though it was not printed until 1632. During the last years of James I., Massinger produced four of his strongest dramas: *The Bondman*, *The Renegado*, *The Parliament of Love*, and *The Great Duke of Florence*. He himself believed *The Roman Actor* to be "the most perfect birth of my Minerva." On the morning of March 17, 1638, Massinger, who had apparently been perfectly well the night before, was found dead in his bed in his house in Bankside: he was buried next day, as "a stranger," in the church of St. Saviour's, Southwark, in a grave which already contained the bones of his friend and master, Fletcher.

*From "THE CITY MADAM"*

*Luke.* 'Twas no fantastic object, but a truth;  
 A real truth, no dream. I did not slumber;  
 And could wake ever with a brooding eye  
 To gaze upon it! it did endure the touch;  
 I saw, and felt it. Yet what I beheld  
 And handled oft, did so transcend belief  
 (My wonder and astonishment pass'd o'er)  
 I faintly could give credit to my senses.  
 Thou dumb magician, that without a charm [To the key,  
 Didst make my entrance easy, to possess  
 What wise men wish and toil for! Hermes' moly;  
 Sibylla's golden bough; the great elixir,  
 Imagined only by the alchymist,  
 Compared with thee, are shadows; thou the substance  
 And guardian of felicity. No marvel,  
 My brother made thy place of rest his bosom,  
 Thou being the keeper of his heart, a mistress  
 To be hugg'd ever. In by-corners of  
 This sacred room, silver, in bags heap'd up,  
 Like billets saw'd and ready for the fire,  
 Unworthy to hold fellowship with bright gold,  
 That flow'd about the room, conceal'd itself.  
 There needs no artificial light, the splendour  
 Makes a perpetual day there, night and darkness  
 By that still-burning lamp for ever banish'd.  
 But when, guided by that, my eyes had made  
 Discovery of the caskets, and they open'd,  
 Each sparkling diamond from itself shot forth  
 A pyramid of flames, and in the roof  
 Fix'd it a glorious star, and made the place  
 Heaven's abstract, or epitome rubies, sapphires,  
 And ropes of orient pearl, these seen, I could not  
 But look on gold with contempt. and yet I found  
 What weak credulity could have no faith in,  
 A treasure far exceeding these Here lay  
 A manor bound fast in a skin of parchment;  
 The wax continuing hard, the acres melting:  
 Here a sure deed of gift for a market town,  
 If not redeem'd this day, which is not in  
 The unthrift's power; there being scarce one shire  
 In Wales or England, where my moneys are not  
 Lent out at usury, the certain hook  
 To draw in more.

*From "A NEW WAY TO PAY OLD DEBTS"*

*Lord Lovell.* Are you not frightened with the imprecations  
And curses of whole families, made wretched  
By your sinister practices ?

*Sir Giles Overreach.* Yes, as rocks are  
When foamy billows split themselves against  
Their flinty ribs ; or as the moon is moved,  
When wolves, with hunger pined, howl at her brightness.  
I am of a solid temper, and, like these,  
Steer on a constant course : with mine own sword,  
If call'd into the field, I can make that right,  
Which fearful enemies murmur'd at as wrong.  
Now, for those other piddling complaints,  
Breathed out in bitterness ; as, when they call me  
Extortioner, tyrant, cormorant, or intruder  
On my poor neighbour's right, or grand encloser  
Of what was common to my private use ;  
Nay, when my ears are pierced with widows' cries,  
And undone orphans wash with tears my threshold ;  
I only think what 'tis to have my daughter  
Right honourable ; and 'tis a powerful charm,  
Makes me insensible of remorse or pity,  
Or the least sting of conscience.

*Lovell.* I admire  
The toughness of your nature.

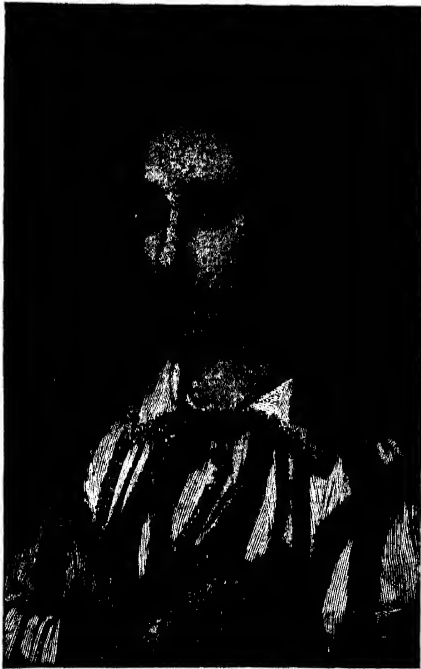
*Sir Giles.* 'Tis for you,  
My lord, and for my daughter, I am marble.

One of the most accomplished of the later generation of actor-dramatists, **Nathaniel Field** (1587-1633), who was born in London in October 1587, was the son of a Puritan preacher who died early in 1588, and a younger brother of Theophilus Field, afterwards Bishop of Hereford. At the age of twelve he was made one of the Children of the Queen's Chapel, and he created the principal rôles in several of Ben Jonson's plays. He was considered, after the death of Burbage, the best actor of his day. Field wrote two very clever comedies—*A Woman a Weathercock*, published in 1612, and *Amends for Ladies* (1618) ; he also collaborated with Massinger in *The Fatal Dowry* (1632). He was unhappily married, and very jealous ; this doubtless accounts for the excessive severity with which women are treated in his plays. Field died on February 20, 1633, and was buried at Blackfriars.

*From "THE FATAL DOWRY"*

*Charalois.* How like a silent stream shaded with night,  
And gliding softly with our windy sighs,  
Moves the whole frame of this solemnity !  
Tears, sighs, and blacks, filling the simile ;  
Whilst I, the only murmur in this grove  
Of death, thus hollowly break forth !—Vouchsafe  
To stay awhile. Rest, rest in peace, dear earth !  
Thou that broughtst rest to their unthankful lives,  
Whose cruelty denied thee rest in death !  
Here stands thy poor executor, thy son,  
That makes his life prisoner to bail thy death ;  
Who gladlier puts on this captivity,  
Than virgins, long in love, their wedding weeds,  
Of all that ever thou hast done good to,

These only have good memories ; for they  
 Remember best, forget not gratitude.  
 I thank you for this last and friendly love.  
 And though this country, like a viperous mother,  
 Not only hath eat up ungratefully  
 All means of thee, her son, but last thyself,  
 Leaving thy heir so bare and indigent,  
 He cannot raise thee a poor monument,  
 Such as a flatterer or an usurer hath ;  
 Thy worth in every honest breast builds one,  
 Making their friendly hearts thy funeral stone.



**Nathaniel Field**

*After the portrait at Dutwich*

*Pontalier.* Sir !

*Charalois.* Peace ! O peace ! This scene is wholly mine—

What ! weep you, soldiers ?—blanch not.  
 —Romont weeps.—

Ha ! let me see ! my miracle is eased ;  
 The jailers and the creditors do weep ;  
 Ev'n they that make us weep, do weep themselves.

Be these thy body's balm ; these and thy virtue

Keep thy fame ever odoriferous,  
 Whilst the great, proud, rich, undeserving man,

Alive stinks in his vices, and, being vanish'd,

The golden calf that was an idol, deck'd  
 With marble pillars, jet and porphyry,  
 Shall quickly both in bone and name consume,

Though wrapp'd in lead, spice, cercloth, and perfume.

*Creditor.* Sir !

*Charalois.* What !—away for shame,  
 —you, profane rogues,

Must not be mingled with these holy relics :

This is a sacrifice—our shower shall crown  
 His sepulchre with olive, myrrh, and bays,  
 The plants of peace, of sorrow, victory :  
 Your tears would spring but weeds.

*John Ford*

The quenching of the dramatic fire was now rapid and final, but in a brief blaze of the sinking embers we encounter JOHN FORD, perhaps as genuine a tragic poet as any of his forerunners, Shakespeare alone excepted. In his best plays we revert for a moment to the old magnificence of diction, the haughty disregard of convention, the contempt for ethical restrictions. What we do not return to is the brocaded richness of the Elizabethan age. Ford is austere and somewhat hard ; he has intensity and passion which sustain him at a level flight of strong and vivid poetry, but he wastes no time on ornament ; he rarely turns aside to mould a metaphor or set a quip on the plain marble of his edifice. He loves what is sombre and fatal ; he is, with the one exception of Webster, the most intellectual of the Jacobean playwrights, and his intrigues are built up on a study of moral problems. It has been pointed out

on more than one occasion, by the present writer, that in his first writings, and in particular in *The Broken Heart*, Ford reminds us less of the English school in its more coloured and glowing characteristics than of other dramatic literatures—that of Greece in the past, that of France in the immediate future.

What distinguishes Ford, then, from all other English dramatists is a severity, we may almost say a rigidity, which isolates him from Fletcher but draws him nearer to Corneille and Retrou. The tendency of the decadent English playwrights was more and more to confuse the art of the stage with the art of romance. It is interesting to perceive that Ford saw the dangers into which his elder compeers had fallen, and that he set himself to avoid some of their worst faults. He is not affected, as were so many of the comic writers; he is not bombastic, with almost all the tragedians. He has a certain grandeur of simplicity, an amplitude of design, both of them marred by an unfortunate monotony of voice. It is only in the one surviving play of his youth, *The Lover's Melancholy*, that Ford indulges in romance and melody. In his great tragedies, especially in *The Broken Heart*, his preservation of the unities, his serried action, his observance of the point of honour, his rapid and ingenious evolution, he is by far the most "classic" of our early dramatists.

Unfortunately Ford had a mania for dark and hideous ethical problems, and he liked the subjects of his plays to be morally improbable. His imagination was daring, and it sought for freshness of idea in forbidden places. He was interested in the history of those things which, as Sir Thomas Browne thought, should not remain on "any register but that of hell." It is therefore in *The Broken Heart*, where his action is not deformed by any pursuit of the impossible, that the essential sublimity of Ford's mind can be studied to the best advantage. This is the only drama of his which has been seen on the modern stage, where its high theatrical qualities have proved that Ford is one of those genuine dramatists who are read, indeed, with enjoyment in the study, but whose genuine appeal should be to the terror and pity of an audience in the theatre.

# THE BROKEN HEART.

## A Tragedy.

ACTED  
By the KINGS Majesties Servants  
at the private House in the  
BLACK-FRIERS.

*Fide Honor.*



LONDON:  
Printed by J. B. for HUGH BREXTON, and are to  
be sold at his Shop, neere the Crosse in  
Crown-Street. 1633

Title-page of Ford's "Broken Heart," 1633

**John Ford** (1586-1656 ?) was the second son of Thomas Ford, of Ilslington, in Devonshire, where the poet was baptized on April 17, 1586. It is believed that he matriculated, before he was fifteen, at Exeter College, Oxford, but his University life was very brief, and he was admitted to the Middle Temple in 1602. In 1606 he published two poems, entitled *Fame's Memorial* and *Honor Triumphant*. It is probable that Ford early began to write for the stage, in collaboration with Dekker, Webster, and others of his seniors. Of his early essays in this kind we possess the masque of *The Sun's Darling*, and the chronicle of *The Witch of Edmonton*, in which Ford had some share. The first play, written wholly by Ford, which we now possess is *The Lover's Melancholy* (1629). In the prologue to *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, printed in 1633, the author speaks of this play as "the firstfruits of his leisure"; he printed *The Broken Heart* and *Love's Sacrifice* in the same year, and it is natural to suppose that some event had at this time enriched him, and by enabling him to desist from his labours had turned his attention to the preservation of his writings. His historical drama of *Perkin Warbeck* belongs to the next year, 1634, and *Fancies Chaste and Noble* to 1638. His last play, *The Lady's Trial*, was published in 1639. It is believed that in that year Ford married, and retired to his paternal home, the manor-house at Ilslington, where he was born. He is said to have had children, and to have died in his Devonshire retreat towards the middle of the century.

From "THE LOVER'S MELANCHOLY"

(Contention of a Bird and a Musician)

Passing from Italy to Greece, the tales  
 Which poets of an elder time have feign'd  
 To glorify their Tempe, bred in me  
 Desire of visiting that paradise.  
 To Thessaly I came, and living private,  
 Without acquaintance of more sweet companions  
 Than the old inmates to my love, my thoughts,  
 I day by day frequented silent groves  
 And solitary walks. One morning early  
 This accident encounter'd me : I heard  
 The sweetest and most ravishing contention  
 That art or nature ever were at strife in. . . .  
 A sound of music touch'd mine ears, or rather  
 Indeed entranced my soul : as I stole nearer,  
 Invited by the melody, I saw  
 This youth, this fair-faced youth, upon his lute  
 With strains of strange variety and harmony  
 Proclaiming (as it seem'd) so bold a challenge  
 To the clear quisters of the woods, the birds,  
 That as they flock'd about him, all stood silent,  
 Wondering at what they heard. I wonder'd too.  
 . . . A nightingale,  
 Nature's best skill'd musician, undertakes  
 The challenge, and, for every several strain  
 The well-shaped youth could touch, she sung her own ;  
 He could not run division with more art  
 Upon his quaking instrument, than she  
 The nightingale did with her various notes  
 Reply to. . . .  
 Some time thus spent, the young man grew at last

Into a pretty anger ; that a bird,  
 Whom art had never taught cliffs, moods, or notes,  
 Should vie with him for mastery, whose study  
 Had busied many hours to perfect practice :  
 To end the controversy, in a rapture  
 Upon his instrument he plays so swiftly,  
 So many voluntaries, and so quick,  
 That there was curiosity and cunning,  
 Concord in discord, lines of differing method  
 Meeting in one full centre of delight.  
 . . . The bird (ordain'd to be  
*Music's first martyr*) strove to imitate  
 These several sounds : which when her warbling throat  
 Fail'd in, for grief down dropt she on his lute  
 And brake her heart. It was the quaintest sadness,  
 To see the conqueror upon her hearse  
 To weep a funeral elegy of tears. . . .  
 He looks upon the trophies of his art,  
 Then sigh'd, then wiped his eyes, then sigh'd, and cried  
 " Alas ! poor creature, I will soon revenge  
 This cruelty upon the author of it.  
 Henceforth this lute, guilty of innocent blood,  
 Shall never more betray a harmless peace  
 To an untimely end " : and in that sorrow,  
 As he was pushing it against a tree,  
 I suddenly stept in.

At the very close of the great school which had opened with Kyd and *James Shirley* Lyly, a placid and elegant talent made its appearance, recurring without vehemence or thrill to the purely ornamental tradition of Shakespeare and Fletcher, and continuing, with a mild monotony, to repeat the commonplaces of the drama until they were hopelessly out of fashion. In the age in which JAMES SHIRLEY lived, his style was recognised as being "sweet-tempered," "discreet" and "sober," and his merits, although they are genuine, are rather of the negative order. His tragedies awaken pity more than horror ; he does not strive to freeze the blood in our veins by scenes which are disfigured with the grimace of torture nor to drive us mad by suspending us over the abysses of fear. He avoids over-emphasis, as much from exhaustion as from good taste. He professes to show us "a dead man's skull beneath the roots of flowers," that is to say, to indicate his strong situations in words which are embroidered with poetic fancy. The comedies of Shirley are polite and merry, rarely gross ; his scenic genius is persistent, but mild and apathetic. The very large body of his work, which seldom sinks below a respectable poetic level, suggests a certain degeneracy in its plenitude ; if Shirley had been richer in intellectual resource he could not have consented to proceed with so placid a uniformity. He would have been worse, that he might become better. If we allow that the great school closes with him, however, we must admit that it closes respectably. Shirley had a good notion of how to construct a play ; he was a competent craftsman ; his attitude to his art was noble ; and as a lyrical poet he had much dignity and sweetness. It was his chronological ill-fortune that he was born to illustrate a dying phase of literature.

**James Shirley** (1596-1666) was born on September 13, 1596, in the parish of St. Mary Woolchurch, in London. In 1608 he entered Merchant Taylors' School, where he did well, and remained for nearly four years. Thence he proceeded to St. John's College, Oxford, where he soon attracted the notice of Laud, then President of St. John's. His wish was to study for holy orders, but this



**James Shirley**

*From a portrait in the 1646 edition of his "Poems"*

Laud forbade him to do, because he was disfigured by a large mole on his left cheek. Perhaps from annoyance at this exclusion, Shirley betook himself for "some precious years" to St. Catherine's Hall, Cambridge. Here in 1618 he published *Echo; or, The Unfortunate Lovers*, of which edition no copy has come down to us; it is conjectured, however, to be mainly identical with the romantic poem of *Narcissus*, which Shirley printed in 1646. He seems to have remained at Cambridge until 1623, when he was appointed Master of St. Albans Grammar School. In the meantime, in spite of Laud and the wen, he had taken orders in the English Church, accepted a living in or near St. Albans, and resigned it on joining the Church of Rome. He greatly disliked being a schoolmaster, and seems to have quitted St. Albans on the success of his earliest play, *The School of Compliment* (*Love Tricks*), in 1625. He soon took a place among the dramatists of his day which was rivalled only by Massinger. In 1631 he

went to reside in Dublin, and wrote while he was there at least twelve plays, including that admirable comedy, *The Lady of Pleasure*. In 1633 his comedy of *The Young Admiral* received public and official commendation for its "beneficial and cleanly way of poetry"; Shirley was offered by the Master of the Revels as "a pattern to other poets," and *The Gamester*, when it was acted in the same year, was pronounced by the King "the best play he had seen for seven years." Shirley came back to England in 1635, but after a few months in London returned



to Ireland, where he stayed for two years. When the Rebellion broke out, Shirley was forced to leave London, but was protected by the Duke (then Earl) of Newcastle, and afterwards by the poet Thomas Stanley. He returned to London after the Restoration, but his second wife and he were driven out of their house near Fleet Street by the great fire of London. They both died of terror and exposure on the same day, in the parish of St. Giles-in-the-Fields, where they were buried in one grave on October 29, 1666.

From "THE SCHOOL OF COMPLIMENT"

*Infortunio.* I must have other answer, for I love you.

*Selina.* Must! but I don't see any necessity that

I must love you. I do confess you are

A proper man.

*Inf.* O, do not mock, Selina; let not excellence,

Which you are full of, make you proud and scornful.

I am a gentleman; though my outward part

Cannot attract affection, yet some have told me,

Nature hath made me what she need not shame.

Yet look into my heart; there you shall see

What you cannot despise, for there you are

With all your graces waiting on you; there

Love hath made you a throne to sit, and rule

O'er Infortunio; all my thoughts obeying,

And honouring you as queen. Pass by my outside,

My breast I dare compare with any man.

*Sel.* But who can see this breast you boast of so?

*Inf.* O, 'tis an easy work; for though it be Not to be pierced by the dull eye, whose beam Is spent on outward shapes, there is a way To make a search into its hiddenest passage. I know you would not love, to please your sense. A tree, that bears a ragged unleaved top In depth of winter, may when summer comes Speak by his fruit he is not dead but youthful, Though once he show'd no sap: my heart's a plant Kept down by colder thoughts and doubtful fears. Your frowns like winter storms make it seem dead, But yet it is not so; make it but yours, And you shall see it spring, and shoot forth leaves Worthy your eye, and the oppressed sap

# POEMS &c.

By

JAMES SHIRLEY.

*Sine aliquâ dementiâ nullus Phœbus.*



LONDON,

Printed for *Humphrey Moseley*, and are to be fold at his shop at the signe of the *Princes Armes* in *St. Pauls Church-yard* 1646.

Title-page of Shirley's collected "Poems," 1646

Ascend to every part to make it green,  
And pay your love with fruit when harvest comes.

*Sel.* Then you confess your love is cold as yet,  
And winter's in your heart.

*Inf.* Mistake me not, Selina, for I say  
My heart is cold, not love.

*Sel.* And yet your love is from your heart, I'll warrant.

*Inf.* O, you are nimble to mistake.  
My heart is cold in your displeasures only,  
And yet my love is fervent, for your eye,  
Casting out beams, maintains the flame it burns in.  
Again, sweet love,  
My heart is not mine own, 'tis yours, you have it.

CALCHAS' HYMN AT THE FUNERAL OF AJAX, *from* "THE  
CONTENTION OF AJAX AND ULYSSES"

The glories of our blood and state  
Are shadows, not substantial things ;  
There is no armour against fate ,  
Death lays his icy hand on kings ;  
Sceptre and Crown  
Must tumble down,  
And in the dust be equal made  
With the poor crooked scythe and spade.

Some men with swords may reap the field,  
And plant fresh laurels where they kill ;  
But their strong nerves at last must yield ;  
They tame but one another still.

Early or late,  
They stoop to fate,  
And must give up their murmuring breath  
While they, pale captives, creep to death.

The garlands wither on your brow ;  
Then boast no more your mighty deeds.  
Upon Death's purple altar now,  
See where the victor-victim bleeds.  
Your heads must come  
To the cold tomb.

Only the actions of the just  
Smell sweet, and blossom in their dust.

*From* "THE TRAITOR"

*Sciarra.* Death's a devouring gamester,  
And sweeps up all ; —what think'st thou of an eye ?  
Couldst thou spare one, and think the blemish recompensed  
To see me safe with the other ? or a hand—  
This white hand, that hath so often  
With admiration trembled on the lute,  
Till we have pray'd thee leave the strings awhile,  
And laid our ears close to thy ivory fingers,  
Suspecting all the harmony proceeded  
From their own motion without the need  
Of any dull or passive instrument ? —  
No, Amidea, thou shalt not bear one scar,  
To buy my life, the sickle shall not touch  
A flower, that grows so fair upon his stalk. . . .

Thy other hand will miss a white companion,  
 And wither on thy arm. What then can I  
 Expect from thee to save me? I would live  
 And owe my life to thee, so 'twere not bought  
 Too dear.

The declining art of drama suffered an abrupt and complete extinction at the breaking out of the Civil War. In March 1639, Davenant had had letters patent granted him for building a new theatre, but the site chosen was not found convenient, and he resigned his right. Sir Henry Herbert was still licensing plays early in 1642. Shirley's *Sisters* passed him in April of that year. In June he licensed a "new play called *The Irish Rebellion*," now not known to exist, and he noted "Here ended my allowance of plays, for the war began in August 1642." In September 1642, the Houses of Parliament published an ordinance that "whereas public sports do not well agree with public calamities, nor public stage-plays with the seasons of humiliation," all performances of the drama should cease. The law was carried out with great severity, and in February 1648 it was further enacted that all theatres should be dismantled, and all actors of plays, even in private, publicly whipped, the audiences being individually fined. This was actually carried out, for while some unfortunate players were giving a performance of Fletcher's *Bloody Brother*, a party of soldiers burst in and carried them off to punishment. It was not until May 1656, and then with great timidity and vigilance, that Davenant, who had been the last adventurer of the old school, came forward as the pioneer of the new, with an operatic entertainment at Rutland House, and drama arose again in England after a complete eclipse of fifteen years.

*The Drama  
 extinguished*

## CHAPTER IX

### JACOBEOAN PROSE

WHILE the condition of poetry and drama in the age which we are now considering was in a very high degree satisfactory and healthy, that of prose was singularly the reverse. The reign of James I. is one of the most discouraging in our history so far as the advance of prose style is concerned. Two English works of great importance, *The Advancement of Learning*, in 1605, and *The History of the World*, in 1614, have been described in an earlier chapter, for they belong to the maturity of those characteristically Elizabethan authors, Bacon and Raleigh. The English *Bible*, in its final form, is the glory of James I., but in like manner it has been discussed on previous pages, as representing, in its essential character, the revised and completed labours of many sixteenth-century divines from Tyndale and Coverdale down to Parker and his bishops. The *Bible* belongs in its glory to no one man or set of men; it grew, in the eighty years of its evolution, like a cathedral. When these features, at all events, are removed from our field of vision, we are struck by the poverty of what remains. The reign of James I. was a period of verse; it was not a period of prose; and we do not discover one other masterpiece to chronicle.

In the ordinary Jacobean prose which we have now to examine we observe a very singular lack of the qualities which belong to growth and encourage to hope. In the very days of Shakespeare, prose, without having reached maturity, is already in decay. The current divinity and history and romance of the early seventeenth century are on the downward, not the upward grade. The mass of them is ponderous, involved, pedantic in a degree not found in the imperfect but vigorous prose-writers of the sixteenth century. If we compare, in the matter of style, Samuel Purchas with Hakluyt, or Morton with Hooker, the decline in lucidity and strength is very remarkable. The whole manner has become complicated and loquacious, with a certain softness which is absolutely decadent. But the parlous state into which English prose was falling is still more surely and more instructively seen by a comparison of it with contemporary French prose. In the mere construction and arrangement of sentences, for instance, it is instructive to compare a page of one of Donne's sermons—and we have nothing better to produce of its kind—with one of Donne's immediate contemporary, St. Francis de Sales. The comparison is between a spirited barbarian and a finished man of the world.

It may be said, however, that the literature of England had for centuries been at least fifty years behind that of France, and that English prose of the

early seventeenth century ought to be weighed against French prose of the middle of the sixteenth. But in that case the advantage is none the less on the side of France. It is not that England did not happen to produce a Rabelais or a Montaigne, because the styles of these men were so extremely personal that they may not have had a direct influence on the national manner of expression. But what was missing in English prose were the formative forces applied by great authors who were a little less individual than Montaigne and Rabelais. For instance, Calvin used the French language with such concise severity, such bitter power, that every Frenchman who read his trenchant sentences instinctively tried to emulate his vigour; while, on the other hand, the sweetness and lightness of Amyot not merely fascinated his readers by their grace, but stimulated them to be graceful themselves. In England we had no one who in any measure acted upon our style as Calvin did on the French; while in place of Amyot, with his pure simplicity, we have to point to Lyly, with his affected amenities and his perilous balance of sentences. Here, indeed, there was stimulus and an encouragement to imitation, but of the most unwholesome kind, so that in fact, while acknowledging the merits of Lyly, we must charge his Euphuism with not a little of the decadence of Jacobean prose, since what he led his unfortunate disciples to do was to strain for delicate effects upon an instrument which was simply out of tune.

It is perhaps not surprising that history did not flourish in England at the beginning of the seventeenth century, for it merely underwent the depression which affected this branch of literature throughout Europe. But the difference between us and our neighbours was that they had enjoyed, at the close of the Middle Ages, valuable schools of history. In Commynes, particularly, France had possessed a great chronicling statesman, a man who could at once be with those who were moving about the centre of affairs and observe the movements in the spirit of a philosopher. With all the romantic charm of Raleigh, he makes no pretension to be a psychologist; he is scarcely curious as to the reasons which guide men to their actions. The French historians of the sixteenth century had in no single case equalled Commynes in genius, but they had followed him with careful enthusiasm. He was their model, and we in England had no great man to follow. Even the impassioned patriotism of the best Frenchmen, although not less felt on our side of the Channel, received far poorer expression, from the lack of skill and practice which our orators enjoyed.

The style of the lesser English historians was artless and casual, and Sir JOHN HAYWARD took credit to himself for giving it a classical turn. Sir Henry Craik, who has recently drawn attention to his writings, holds that Heyward was justified in his self-gratulation, and that his books "mark a distinct step forward in the historical style." He attempted to improve upon the old humdrum chroniclers by arranging his events rhetorically, in the manner of Livy, whom he followed in putting dramatic speeches into the mouths of his prominent personages. This had been done by Machiavelli

and others, and although it is contrary to modern scientific methods, it was not unfavourable to the literary form of history. A humbler writer was the industrious John Speed (see p. 80), who laboured under the disadvantage of a lack of education. He was a great collector and compiler, and before he essayed his own *History of Great Britain*, Speed not merely spent years in making himself acquainted with what had been gathered together by his predecessors, but he called in other and more learned men than himself to help him. Among these the most eminent was "that worthy repairer of eating Time's ruins," Sir Robert



Sir John Hayward

*From the scarce engraved portrait by Crispin de Passe*

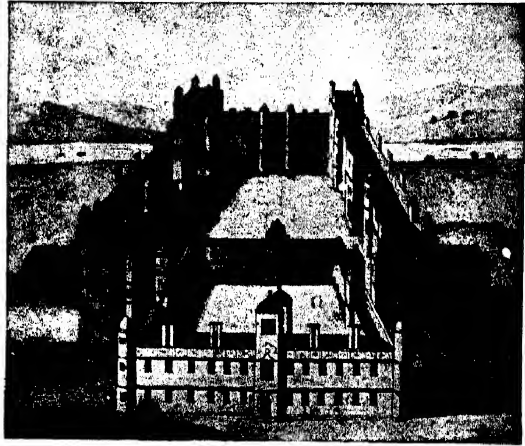
Cotton (see p. 80), who revised, corrected and polished the whole work before Speed ventured upon issuing it. Cotton was the leading antiquary of the age, and his "cabinets were unlocked, and his library continually set open to the free access" of Speed and of his army of assistants. These men had much in common with the restless city chronicler of a previous generation, John Stow. Like him, they thought mainly of collecting and arranging. The accuracy of the documents affected them little, and their philosophical import not at all, but they amassed material with the energy of the coral insect. While we mention their modest services, we should not forget those of Sir HENRY SPELMAN, who had something of the spirit of Stubbs and Freeman, since he would not adopt the rhetorical paraphrases at that time fashionable, but in compiling the civil affairs of

the country down to Magna Charta, whenever he could do so printed them in the exact words of his authorities. But the excellent Spelman is hardly to be included among writers of English prose.

**Sir John Hayward** (1564-1627) was born at Felixstowe about 1564, and was educated at Pembroke College, Cambridge. His *First Year of Henry IV.* appeared in 1599, with a dedication to Essex in such glowing terms that Queen Elizabeth ordered Bacon to examine the book for treason. The reply was that the Queen need not "rack his person," but his style, as he had committed no treason, but a great deal of felony by his plagiarisms. James I. liked Hayward, and patronised his various publications, knighting him in 1619; and he acted as a sort of historiographer to the unfortunate Prince Henry. Hayward worked with Camden at Chelsea College. **Sir Henry Spelman** (1564-1641), a lifelong friend and associate of each of the preceding historians, was born at

Congham, near Lynn Regis. He was an Anglo-Saxon scholar who mainly composed his archæological and historical works in Latin, but his *Life of King Alfred the Great*, which remained in MS. until Hearne published it in 1709, was composed in English. Spelman was a scholar of prodigious energy and perseverance, and filled vast storehouses with information which later investigators have referred to at their ease. The relation of each of the writers mentioned in this chapter to the illustrious Camden, who was their intellectual father, must not be overlooked.

The writers who have just been mentioned were contented to be hewers of wood and drawers of water for those who came after them, but RICHARD KNOLLES seems to have been ambitious to achieve fame in his own person as a picturesque writer. If this was his aim, we have to admit that to a partial and fitful degree he succeeded in attaining it. His one book was still widely read long after its author passed away, and has met with admirers among the most punctilious of modern critics. Dr. Johnson had an extraordinary enthusiasm for Knolles, whom he considered, as a writer, the greatest among British historians. He said that "his style, though sometimes vitiated by false wit, is pure, nervous, elevated and clear." Hallam, Southey and Coleridge were also admirers of Knolles, and Byron attributed to the reading of *The History of the*



Chelsea College

From Grose's "*Military Antiquities*," 1788

*Turks* in childhood "the oriental colouring which is observed in my poetry." It must be confessed that Knolles' huge folio, adorned with plates of all the Sultans, real and fabulous, has ceased to attract readers. The subject, so keenly interesting to Jacobean readers, has become hopelessly remote to us. To enjoy the rolling sentences and haughty rhetoric of *The History of the Turks* we must throw ourselves back to the leisurely times in which it was composed. Still Knolles is as likely as any Jacobean prose writer extant to enjoy one of those sudden revivals of literary reputation which occur from time to time. At present his fame, if not precisely extinct, is certainly dormant, and we cannot any longer see the flamboyant Amuraths and Mustaphas as they were seen by the simple, single-minded and romantic old dominie of Sandwich.

**Richard Knolles** (1548 ? -1610) was born at Cold Ashby, in Northamptonshire, and educated at Lincoln College, Oxford, of which he was made a fellow in 1570. He was poor, and his abilities attracted the notice of a prominent Kentish lawyer, Sir Roger Marwood, who made Knolles master of the Grammar School of

Sandwich. In this little town he resided for the remainder of his life. It appears that Knolles had always been fascinated by Turkish history, but soon after 1590 he settled down to the composition of a great work on the subject. While he was preparing, in 1598, the French antiquary, J. J. Boissard, published a Latin *Lives of the Sultans* at Frankfort; this greatly encouraged Knolles, who, to tell the truth, did not scruple to poach systematically on Boissard's preserves. In 1603 Knolles published his *General History of the Turks*. He continued to enlarge it, and after his death it was further revised by other hands. Knolles was buried at Sandwich on July 2, 1610.

*Theology*



Sir Henry Spelman

*From an old engraving*

The question of the toleration of religious dissent, and of Church discipline generally, produced an enormous amount of printed matter to very little of which the word "literature" can any longer, even by indulgence, be applied. Many years ago, Mr. Swinburne, commenting on the romantic interest, literary and linguistic, which attaches to all Elizabethan and Jacobean writings, suggested that sooner or later every book of that period might be reprinted with some profit,—except, of course, the divinity. This exception on the part of a scholar so enthusiastically devoted to the Jacobean genius exemplifies the worthlessness of the body of controversial theology. Our language produced under Elizabeth and under James I. two theologians of genius—Hooker and Donne respectively, one in each

generation. If we remove these two, the residue is seen to be poor indeed. As to the spirit of it, factious, intolerant and rude, we have only to study Bacon's *Pacification and Edification of the Church of England* to learn how its strident notes jarred on the ear of that urbane philosopher. It was perceived quite early in the seventeenth century by perspicuous statesmen, that the English Church had to deal with two very dangerous and insidious enemies, foes whose peril was greater in that they were of her own household. These were Catholicism on the one hand and Puritanism on the other. Almost on James I.'s arrival in London the Millenary Petition showed him what a profound interest all classes of his subjects took in ceremonial legislation, and this was a theme about which the author of the *Basilicon Doron* of 1599 was as eager as the keenest of them.

The importance of all these enactments and solutions was immense; but the literature which prepared the way for and accompanied them was, as a



rule, poor indeed. Most of the theological books of this period read like so many notes in a diary. They are strings of detached observations, or more commonly citations, to be used in court by an advocate. They are full of illustrations and parallels; the juridical entirely excludes the imaginative or even the rhetorical order of ideas. Nothing could exceed the dreariness, the ineffectual dulness of the writings of most of James I.'s leading bishops. RICHARD MONTAGU (1577-1641), who became Bishop of Chichester, was an extremely effective controversialist in the taste of the day, and in that defence of his own High Church views and of the King's policy, which he published in *Appello Cæsarem* in 1625, he produced the most famous pamphlet of the day. But Montagu is now absolutely unreadable. The King greatly admired the pamphlets and treatises of Andrewes, largely, no doubt, because that prelate, in his Latin discourses, gave himself some breadth of movement and aimed at a certain literary effect; but these writings have no place in English literary history. Nothing displays the poverty of English theological literature at the beginning of the seventeenth century, however, so violently as to compare it with what was best in contemporary France, with the imaginative freshness and fulness, the broad rich wave of metaphor and illustration, which poured from the pulpit of St. Francis de Sales.



Title-page of "The History of the Turks," 1603

tion of patristic learning, its lumbering gait, its undignified scrappiness, we see the ill effect of the moral passions of the moment. It was an age of controversy, and wrangling discussion is not good for prose. Moreover, a taste for mere casuistry was greatly encouraged by James I. We are told that "the King longed to discourse with a man who had dedicated his studies to that useful part of learning," and ROBERT SANDERSON (1587-1663), Bishop of Lincoln, owed his promotion to the reputation he enjoyed for his skill in chopping straws of dogma. This admirable man, who grew in his old age to be the most dignified figure in the English Church, is an instance of the divorce between theology and literature. His popularity as a writer was immense; of his *Lectures* of 1615 there were sold 10,000 copies. His philosophical disquisitions gave him high authority. But to read the dense and ponderous volumes of Sanderson would nowadays be a task which even an ecclesiastical historian might shrink from. Among the pure casuists, JOSEPH HALL was the most agreeable writer, and his ingenious, fluent and sophistical meditations may still be examined with pleasure. JAMES USSHER (1581-1656), the famous Archbishop of Armagh, is all coagulated learning. WILLIAM PERKINS (1558-1602), in whom the seventeenth century proclaimed an English Calvin, was highly popular as an awakener of the Puritan conscience, and possessed high pretensions as a writer, but his salt has lost its savour. Of lesser theologians it would certainly be out of place to speak in this purely literary compendium.

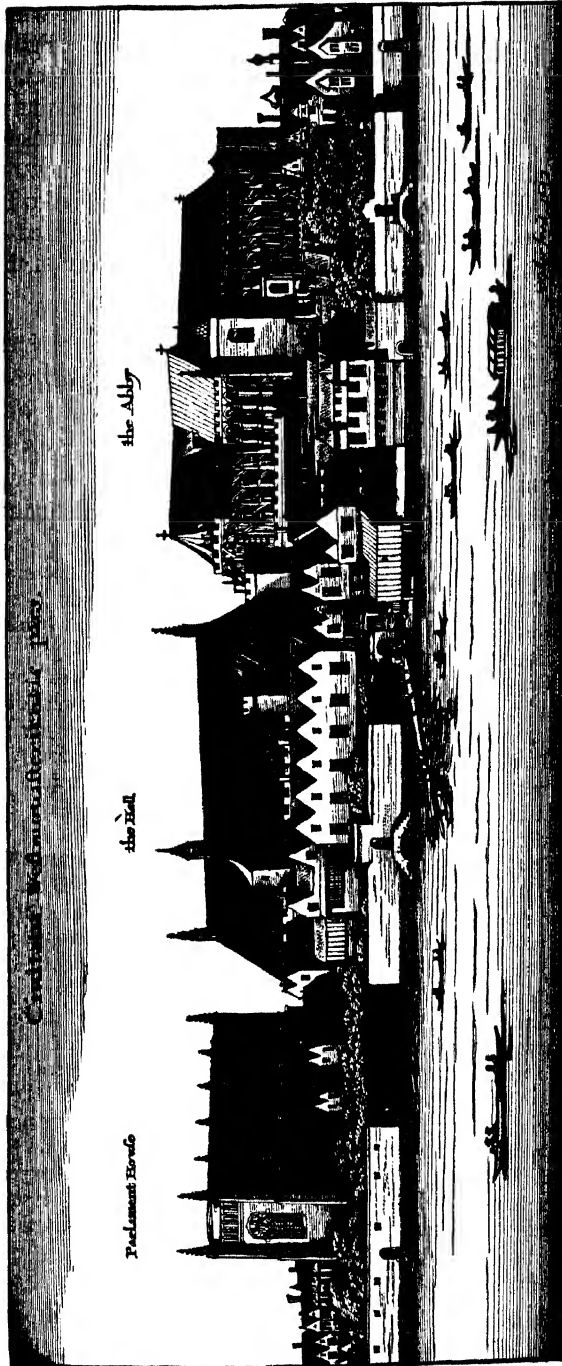
It is in the pulpit effusions of the Jacobean theologians that we find what is most encouraging to a student of literature. It was the practice to recite a discourse which had been prepared before, and which, if possible, was learned by heart. In many cases it was written down as an aid to memory, and locked away for future use; this is how the posthumous sermons of Donne and Andrewes have been preserved for us. Sanderson, whose memory was painfully infirm, was the earliest preacher who read his discourse from the pulpit. Until his day something of the miraculous prestige of heaven-descended oratory was sought to be preserved by the most famous divines. The *Sermons* of the angelical LANCELOT ANDREWES, "the star of preachers," display to us the qualities which were most enthusiastically welcomed from the pulpit in the days of James I. The oddity of phraseology, the affectations, quips and pranks of style, are so extraordinary in the surviving English writings of Andrewes that it is difficult to realise that they were once considered exemplary and found impressive. In his own age, the strange gymnastics of the bishop's language were not unobserved, but were the objects of adoring emulation. His fellow-translator on the *Authorised Version*, NICHOLAS FELTON, Bishop of Ely (1556-1626), admits that he tried hard to write like Andrewes, "and had almost marred my own natural trot by endeavouring to imitate his artificial amble." It was said, in a less eulogistic spirit, that Andrewes had "reduced preaching to punning." There must have been something radically wrong in the taste of an age which persuaded the most saintly of its prelates, a man of the purest and noblest character, to indulge

in such linguistical buffooneries as deface the *Sermons* of Lancelot Andrewes. But it must not be forgotten that he looked upon Latin as the vehicle of his serious and important declarations, and that his sermons, in which in lighter mood he sported indulgently with his courtly audiences, were not prepared by himself for publication. In that vast labour for the Church of England, in which Andrewes stood forth as *incomparabile propugnaculum*—an incomparable bulwark—his English writings took a negligible place.

### Lancelot Andrewes (1555-1626)

(see p. 101) was born at Allhallows, Barking, in 1555. He was an excellent scholar at Merchant Tailors' School, and gained a fellowship at Pembroke College, Cambridge. When Jesus College, Oxford, was founded, young Andrewes was invited to be one of its

foundation fellows, and in 1580 he took holy orders. He was a great favourite with Queen Elizabeth, who appointed him one of her chaplains and Dean of Westminster. At the accession of James I. Andrewes rose higher still in Court favour, and was made Bishop of Chichester in 1605, and had promotions showered upon him.



Westminster in the Seventeenth Century

From a print by Hollar, 1647

Andrewes became successively Bishop of Ely and of Winchester. He headed the list of authorised translators of the Bible in 1611. Fuller tells us that James I. had so great an awe and veneration for Andrewes that, in the bishop's presence, he refrained from that uncouth and unsavoury jesting in which he was accustomed to indulge at other times. This admirable prelate, "an infinite treasure, an amazing oracle," died at Winchester House, Southwark, on September 25, 1626. His English *Sermons*, at the particular desire of Charles I., were collected by Laud and Buckeridge, and ninety-six of them were published in 1628. In his lifetime there had only appeared a little volume of sermons on the Lord's Prayer, entitled *Scala Cæli*, in 1611.

One fault is certainly lacking to the sermons of Lancelot Andrewes: they are not pompous. They are, on the contrary, highly colloquial, and they have come down to us exactly as they must have been spoken, less "touched up" for the press than any other theological writings of the time. A perfectly fair example of them,—at their best indeed,—may be quoted from that *Of the Sending of the Holy Ghost*, preached on Whitsunday, 1617:

How comes the heart broken? The common hammer that breaks them [*sic*] is some bodily or worldly cross, such as we commonly call heart-breakings. There be here in the text [Luke iv 18, 19] three strokes of this hammer, able I think to break any heart in the world.

Captivity. They be captives first, and "captives" and "cartiffs," in our speech, sound much like one. It is sure a condition able to make any man hang up his harp, and sit weeping by the waters of Babylon. There is one stroke.

Then follows another, worse yet. For, in Babylon, though they were captives, yet went they abroad, had their liberty. These here are in prison, and in some blind hole there, as it might be in the dungeon, where they see nothing. That, I take it, is meant by "blind" here in the text, blind for want of light, not for want of sight, though these two both come to one, are convertible. They that are blind, say they are dark, and they that be in the dark, for the time are deprived of sight, have no manner use of it at all, no more than a blind man. Now they that row in the galeys, yet thus comfort they have, they see the light, and if a man see nothing else, the light is comfortable. And a great stroke of the hammer it is, not to have so much als that poor comfort left them.

But yet are we not at the worst. One stroke more. For one may be in the dungeon and yet have his limbs at large, his hands and feet at liberty. But so have not those in the text, but are in irons, and those so heavy and pinching, as they are even *τετραναμμένοι*, "bruised," and hurt with them. See now their case. Captives, and not only that, but in prison. In prison, not above, but in the dungeon, the deepest, darkest, blindest hole there, no light, no sight at all. And in the hole, with as many irons upon them, that they are even bruised and sore with them. And tell me now, if these three together be not enough to break Manasses', or any man's heart, and to make him have *cor contritum* indeed?

The familiarities of the Jacobean sermon were, however, intentional. We are told of Andrewes himself, by his editor, John Buckeridge (1562-1631), Bishop of Ely, that "he was always a diligent and painful preacher," and that his addresses "were thrice revised before they were preached." In Buckeridge, himself a prominent sermon-writer, we find exactly the same peculiarities of style, a mixture of quibbling Euphuism and prosaic homeliness dashed with incessant quotation of Latin; and these may be taken to represent what

was most commonly aimed at in pulpit oratory throughout the reign of James I.

The question of the toleration of religious nonconformity was one which steadily occupied the thoughts of King James, and led to the production of an extraordinary amount of writing. Most of this was wholly ephemeral in form as in matter, but James employed in his controversies the ablest minds which he could command. Andrewes was one of those who defended the King against Bellarmine and his other opponents on the continent of Europe whom his views on episcopacy and allegiance had stung into fury; but the controversial pamphlets of Andrewes were in Latin. Among those who warred with Rome in a ceaseless flow of English "apologies" and "incounters" and "defences" and "replies" none was more active and none quite so vigorous as, in his youth, THOMAS MORTON, afterwards Bishop of Durham. The tracts poured forth by his indefatigable zeal against his Romish adversaries have the faults of the age, but occasionally overcome them, and when Morton is really angry, he writes directly to the point. In such sentences as the following there is wonderfully little of the prevailing languor of prose style :



Thomas Morton

*After an engraving by William Faithorne*

If I had not believed upon sufficient evidence that the succession of Bishops in the Church of England had been legally derived from the Apostles, I had never entered into that high calling, much less continued in it thus long. And therefore I must here expressly vindicate myself from a most notorious untruth which is cast upon me by a late Romish writer, that I should, publicly, in the House of Peers, the beginning of the last Parliament, assent to that abominable fiction which some Romanists have devised concerning the consecrating Matthew Parker at the Nag's Head Tavern to be Archbishop of Canterbury. For I do here solemnly profess I have always believed that fable to proceed from the Father of Lies, as the public records still extant do evidently testify. Nor do I remember that ever I heard it mentioned in that or in any other parliament that ever I sate in. As for our brethren, the Protestants of foreign reformed churches, the most learned and judicious of themselves have bewailed their misery for want of Bishops. And therefore God forbid I should be so uncharitable as to censure them for no-churches, for that which is their infelicity, not their fault. But as for our perverse Protestants at home, I cannot say the same of them, seeing they impiously reject that which the others piously desire.

**Thomas Morton** (1564-1659) was the son of a mercer at York, where he was born on March 20, 1564. He was sent to St. John's College, Cambridge, where





This was for youth, Strength, Mind, and age that Time  
 Most count their golden Age; but this, not mine,  
 Time was thy later years, so much thy youth  
 From youth's Dreße, Mirth, & merriment, and  
 Thought (like the Angels) nothing but the thought  
 Of thy Creator, in those last, best, Days.  
 Writing this Booke, (thy Confession) which begins  
 With Love, but ends with Death, & Tears, for still  
 I am thy Marshall.

John Donne.

ENGRAVED BY W. MARSHALL, AFTER A PORTRAIT PAINTED IN 1597





his fantastic romance, a diatribe against the Jesuits, called *Ignatius his Conclave*, unquestionably exhibit sympathy with what was morbid in the temper of the time. They are to theology what the tragedies of Ford are to drama.

But when we turn to the *Sermons* of Donne we rise to a much higher plane. Walton, who heard many of these discourses delivered, has left us a wonderful description of their author in the majesty of his prestige at St. Paul's :

Preaching the Word so as showed his own heart was possessed with those very thoughts and joys that he laboured to distil into others : a preacher in earnest ; weeping sometimes for his auditory, sometimes with them ; always preaching to himself, like an angel from a cloud, but in none ; carrying some, as St. Paul was, to heaven in holy raptures, and enticing others by a sacred art and courtship to amend their lives : here picturing a vice so as to make it ugly to those that practised it, and a virtue so as to make it beloved even by those that loved it not ; and all this with a most particular grace and an inexpressible addition of comeliness.

I am given to Royston, and I make account  
that his note may receive the booke thy,  
Ene minge. So that y<sup>e</sup> may at y<sup>e</sup> first by  
your deliver thy booke to my L. to who I be-  
lieve y<sup>e</sup> to recommend me most humble ser-  
vies .

Y<sup>e</sup> Ever to be  
commanded

24 Jan.

Donne

Letter from Donne to Sir Robert Cotton

There is a doubt as to the degree in which these magnificent sermons were orally delivered. The preacher certainly held no manuscript before him, while yet the effort of retaining in the memory such a rich coil of interminably complicated sentences is hardly credible. It seems probable that the sermon was carefully composed and written, as we now possess it, but that the preacher merely spoke a discourse on the same lines which he kept as close to his original as he could. His rule was to preach for exactly sixty minutes ; he had " his

hour and but an hour," Brathwayte tells us. Andrewes died in 1626, the year that Donne began to preach at St. Dunstan's-in-the-West, and the celebrity of Donne soon surpassed that of his most renowned predecessor. Age added splendour to the voice of the fiery and yet sombre Dean of St. Paul's. His hearers, borne along upon the flow of his sinuous melody, now soft and winning, now vehement in storm, now piercing like a clarion, now rolling in the meditative music of an organ, felt themselves lifted up to heaven itself. In the early days of Charles I. a sermon delivered by Dean Donne was the most brilliant public entertainment which London had to offer. One of the most magnificently sustained pieces of religious composition in English literature is the *Second Prebend Sermon*, a long poem of victory over death, which he winds up in this imperial peroration :



Bishop Hall

*From an engraving of the picture in  
Emmanuel College, Cambridge*

As my soul shall not go towards heaven,  
but go by heaven to heaven, to the heaven of  
heavens, so the true joy of a good soul in this  
world is the very joy of heaven ; and we go  
hither, not that being without joy, we might  
have joy infused into us, but that, as Christ  
says, *Our joy might be full*, perfected, sealed  
with an everlastingness ; for, as He promises,  
*That no man shall take our joy from us*, so  
neither shall death itself take it away, nor so  
much as interrupt it, or discontinue it, but as  
in the face of death, when he lays hold upon  
me, and in the face of the devil, when he  
attempts me, I shall see the face of God (for  
everything shall be a glass, to reflect God  
upon me), so in the agonies of death, in the  
anguish of that dissolution, in the sorrows of  
that valediction, in the irreversibleness of that  
transmigration, I shall have a joy, which shall  
no more evaporate, than my soul shall  
evaporate, a joy, that shall pass up, and put on  
a more glorious garment above, and be joy  
superinvested in glory.

The student may with advantage compare the structure of this sentence with that of some of De Quincey's most studied and rolling paragraphs. Less frequent in Donne, but not less welcome when they come, are his descents to the familiar and the confidential. In the *Funeral Sermon for Sir William Cockayne* he tells us how difficult he found it to concentrate his thoughts in pure devotion :

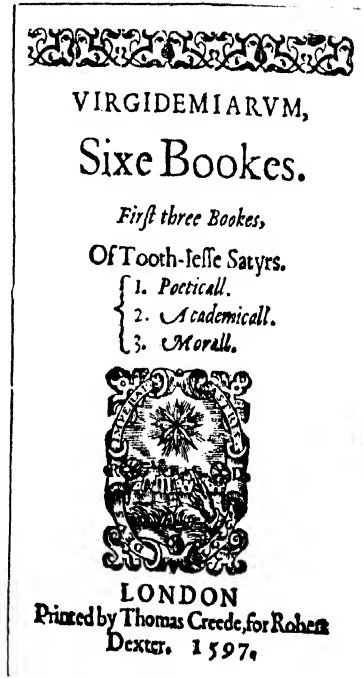
I throw myself down in my chamber, and I call in and invite God and his angels thither ; and when they are there, I neglect God and His angels for the noise of a fly, for the rattling of a coach, for the whining of a door ; I talk on, in the same posture of prayer ; eyes lifted up, knees bowed down, as though I prayed to God ; and if God should ask me when I thought last of God in that prayer I cannot tell : sometimes I find that I forgot what I was about, but when I began to forget it, I cannot tell. A memory of yesterday's pleasures, a fear of to-morrow's dangers, a straw under my knee, a noise in mine ear, a chimera in my brain, troubles me in my prayer.

Donne's famous treatise on self-homicide, the *Biathanatos*, is difficult to quote from, but one striking passage may be detached from its chain of cited instances and legal arguments :

Since I may without flying, or eating, when I have means, attend an executioner or famine ; since I may offer my life, even for another's temporal good ; since I must do it for his spiritual ; since I may give another my board [plank] in a shipwreck, and so drown ; since I may hasten my arrival to heaven by consuming penances,—it is a wayward and un noble stubbornness in argument to say, still, I must not kill myself, but I may let myself die ; since, of affirmations and denials, of omissions and committings, of enjoining and prohibitory commands, ever the one implies and enwraps the other. And if the matter shall be resolved and governed only by an outward act, and ever by that ; if I forbear to swim [when thrown into] a river, and so perish, because there is no act, I shall not be guilty ; and yet I shall be guilty if I discharge a pistol upon myself, which I know not to be charged, nor intended harm, because there is an act.

The sermons of Hall are lively and sententious, but not convincing. His adversaries charged him, to his great indignation, with loquacity, and advised him to let his "words be less in number." In spite of his anger, the advice was needed ; Hall's verbose and chattering style is very tedious, when he allows it to carry him away "in an unprofitable babbling." But he did not suffer from the Jacobean crabbedness, or from that stagnation of sentences which makes some earlier divines so difficult to read. He flows along easily enough, even diffusely, even laxly. In controversy Hall remembers his early training as a satirist ; in his devotional exercises he strikes us as rather ingenious than fervent, more intelligent than impassioned.

There was little promise of its saintly close in the early part of the career of **Joseph Hall** (1574-1656). He was born at Ashby-de-la-Zouch, and educated at Emmanuel College, Cambridge. Here he seems to have resided, and to have been prominent among the wild University wits. In 1597 he published his six books "of toothless satires"—*Virgidemiarum*—of which some account has already been given. These display an undisciplined spirit, much hot anger against the poets of the time, and a narrow antagonism to progress. Nothing could be less spiritual than Hall's attitude to life in these juvenile satires, the fallacies of which Milton afterwards exposed. In 1601, however, he took the college living of Halsted, but his residence was not such as to prevent him from travelling



Title-page of Hall's "*Virgidemiarum*,"  
1597

much in the Netherlands and elsewhere. After a somewhat stormy career, Hall was made Dean of Worcester, and then, in 1627, Bishop of Exeter, being translated in 1641 to Norwich. During the Civil War his cathedral was desecrated and he himself driven with ignominy from his palace, reduced to beggary and imprisoned, as he describes in his *Hard Measure* of 1674. But he survived until 1656, after having written a sort of autobiography in his *Observations on some Specialities of Divine Providence*. In his last illness Hall was attended by Sir Thomas Browne, who venerated him.

A passage from one of Hall's sermons gives a fair impression of his manner as a preacher :

*From "IT IS FINISHED"*

Every one of our sins is a thorn and a nail and a spear to him. While thou pourest down thy drunken carouses, thou givest thy Saviour a potion of gall. While thou dispiritest His poor servants, thou spittest on his face. While thou putttest on thy proud dresses and liftest up thy vain heart with high conceits, thou settest a crown of thorns on his head. While thou wringest and oppressest his poor children, thou whippest him and drawest blood of his hands and feet. Thou hypocrite, how darest thou offer to receive the sacrament of God with that hand which is thus imbued with the blood of him whom thou receivest? In every ordinary thy profane tongue walks, in the disgrace of the religious and conscionable. . . . Now are we set on the sandy pavement of our theatre, and are matched with all sorts of evils; evil men, evil spirits, evil accidents, and, which is worst, our own evil hearts. Temptations, crosses, persecutions, sicknesses, wants, infamies, death,—all these must in our courses be encountered by the law of our profession. . . . God and his angels sit upon the scaffolds of heaven and behold us. Our crown is ready. Our day of deliverance shall come. Yea, our redemption is near, when all tears shall be wiped away from our eyes, and we that have sown in tears shall reap in joy.



**Sir Thomas Overbury**

*After a portrait by Cornelius Janssen*

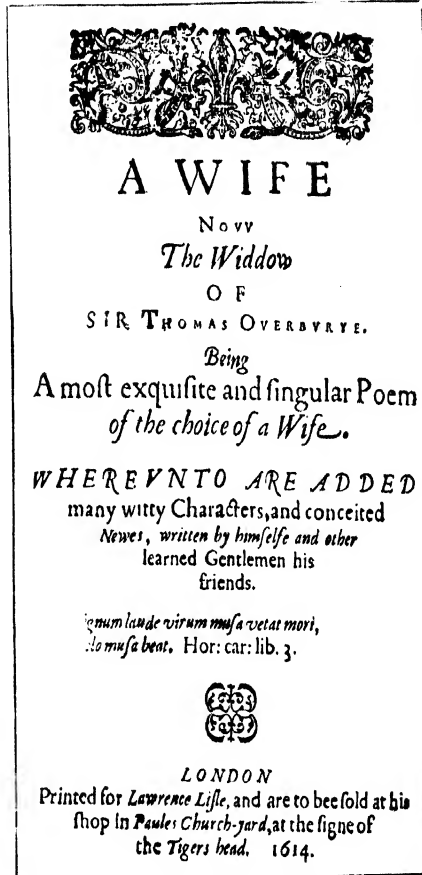
#### *Characters*

With an important movement in the English literature of this time Hall was also identified. If we hold that in the greater part of the reigns of James I. and Charles I. the development of prose style was generally arrested, it must be admitted that it did blossom forth in the fashionable imitations of the clear and lively sketches which the antique world attributed to Theophrastus, the pupil of Aristotle. In 1592, Casaubon, to whom and to Scaliger the modern literatures of Europe owe so great a debt, had edited Theophrastus with a luminous commentary. This attracted the attention of English writers to him, and Hall, in his *Characters of Virtues and Vices* of 1608, and his "occasional meditations," introduced the fashion for composing short essays in humorous philosophy. Theophrastus had confined himself to studies of the intrinsic behaviour

of representative men. Joseph Hall, in his entertaining little book, had added the qualifications for holding certain special offices. He was followed by a book to which adventitious circumstances lent a glamour of romance, the extravagantly popular *Characters* (1614) of Sir THOMAS OVERBURY. As time went on, the example of Theophrastus, as seen through Hall and Overbury, combined with the imitation of Bacon to produce a curious school of comic or ironic portraiture, partly ethical and partly dramatic, typical examples of which in the next generation were the sketches of Earle and Owen Feltham, and the *Country Parson* of George Herbert. No small addition to the charm of these light essays-in-little was the hope of discovering in the philosophical portrait the face of a known contemporary. This sort of literature culminated in Europe in the work of La Bruyère, but not until 1688, and was afterwards elaborated by Addison.

The name of **Sir Thomas Overbury** (1581-1613) was rendered popular to excess by the mysterious crime, the most scenic of that age, of which he was the victim. Overbury was an ingenious young courtier, who formed a close friendship with the King's notorious favourite, Robert Kerr, Lord Rochester. When the latter wished to marry Lady Essex, Overbury opposed the match, and in 1613 was sent in disgrace to the Tower, where Lady Essex, apparently with the connivance of Rochester, procured his murder by slow poisoning. On September 15, 1613, he died, and was buried in the Tower; "and now

the great ones thought all future danger to be inhumed with the dead body." The secret, however, was known to several persons, and in 1615 Rochester, now Earl of Somerset, with his Countess, who was the principal in the crime, were arrested on a charge of murder. Four of the accomplices were hanged, but the Somersets were pardoned. The trial, in which some of the greatest persons in England were involved, caused an unparalleled sensation, and the King's own character was in imminent peril. Overbury was found to have left works in prose and verse, and these being collected soon after his tragic death achieved an extreme popularity. His poems are poor, but his prose has considerable grace and brightness.



Title-page of Overbury's "Wife," 1614

It is proper to point out that the extremely popular Theophrastian *Characters*, which were published in his name, were "written by himself and other learned gentlemen his friends." The following, whether written by Overbury or one of his companions, offers a favourable example of this popular kind of writing :

#### A FAIR AND HAPPY MILKMAID

Is a country wench, which is so far from making herself beautiful by art, that



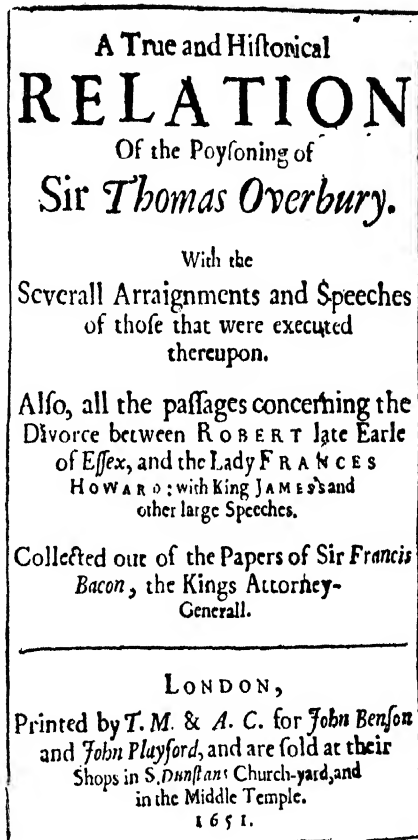
The Countess of Somerset

one look of hers is able to put all face-physic out of countenance. She knows a fair look is but a dumb orator to commend virtue, therefore minds it not. All her excellencies stand in her so silently, as if they had stolen upon her without her knowledge. The lining of her apparel (which is her self) is far better than outsides of tissue ; for though she be not arrayed in the spoil of the silk-worm, she is decked in innocence, a far better wearing. She doth not, with lying long abed, spoil both her complexion and conditions ; nature hath taught her, too immoderate sleep is rust to the soul : she rises therefore with chanticleer, her dame's cock, and at night makes the lamb her curfew. In milking a cow, and straining the teats through her fingers, it seems that so sweet a milk-press makes the milk the whiter or sweeter ; for never came almond glove or aromatic ointment on her

palm to taint it. The golden ears of corn fall and kiss her feet when she reaps them, as if they wished to be bound and led prisoners by the same hand that felled them. Her breath is her own, which scents all the year long of June, like a new-made hay-cock. She makes her hand hard with labour, and her heart soft with pity : and when winter evenings fall early (sitting at her merry wheel) she sings a defiance to the giddy wheel of fortune. She doth all things with so sweet a grace, it seems ignorance will not suffer her to do ill, being her mind is to do well. She bestows her year's wages at next fair ; and in choosing her garments, counts no bravery in the world, like decency. The garden and bee-hive are all her physick and surgery, and she lives the longer for it. She dares go alone and unfold sheep in the night, and fears no manner of ill, because she means none ; yet to say truth, she is never alone, for she is still accompanied with old songs, honest thoughts, and prayers, but short ones ; yet they have their efficacy, in that they are not painted with ensuing idle cogitations. Lastly, her dreams are so chaste, that she dare tell them ; only a Friday's dream is all her superstition : that she conceals for fear of anger. Thus lives she, and all her care is she may die in the springtime, to have store of flowers stuck upon her winding-sheet.

Jacobean literature which preceded and then accompanied it, the sociological and satirical pamphlets of which the most popular were written by THOMAS DEKKER and SAMUEL ROWLANDS. These writers deliberately addressed the reader who wished to be amused and startled, not the student who desired mental improvement. When we, after nearly three hundred years have elapsed, are brought face to face with their amazing pictures of social life, and ask ourselves, Can such things have been? we need to be reminded that a pamphleteer like Dekker was not a statistician or a social reformer, but a caterer for public amusement. It was necessary to rouse his public, and this he had to do by preposterously overcharging his picture. His interiors, his sketches of low life in great towns, his revelations of "conny-catching," "gulling" and horse-coping, are intended to amuse; at every point Dekker more or less consciously exaggerates the words and the things he enumerates. He is not writing as a psychologist or as an historian; he is making a living by writing down, with more or less scrupulous art, what will astonish us and awaken our attention. In the pursuit of this picturesque sensationalism he is often very successful; *Lanthorn and Candlelight* and *The Gull's Hornbook* are among the liveliest productions of the Jacobean age. But they should not be taken too seriously as realistic delineations of life in London. Dekker descends in the natural order from Lyly, Greene and Nash, and he may be taken as a link in the ultimate evolution of the English novel of character. Of his work as a playwright we have already spoken (p. 331).

Of **Thomas Dekker** very little is known apart from his voluminous authorship. He was probably of Dutch extraction, and was certainly born in London, perhaps about 1570. As early as 1597 he was known as a dramatist, and there are entries in Henslowe's *Diary* of many lost plays in which he was engaged. He was a merchant-tailor, an industrious literary hack, and extremely poor. Beyond this we have only to record that from 1613 to 1620 he seems to have been in prison, "the bed in which seven years I lay dreaming." Among the best plays of Dekker



Title-page of one of the pamphlets relating to the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury

are *Old Fortunatus*, *The Honest Whore*, *Satiromastix*, and *The Virgin Martyr*, in the last of which he collaborated with Massinger. Of his very numerous prose treatises, the best known are *The Bachelor's Banquet* (1603), *The Seven Deadly Sins of London* (1606), *News from Hell* (1606), *Lanthorn and Candlelight* (1608), and *The Gull's Hornbook* (1609). In his old age Dekker wrote with Ford and Rowley; he disappears after 1640. **Samuel Rowlands** was a similar pamphleteer, who wrote *Hell's Broke Loose* (1606), *The Melancholy Knight* (1619), and a vast number of similar works of entertain-

ment, but who is not known to have contributed to the stage. The following passage, from the *Jests to Make You Merry*, of 1607, displays Dekker in his more sententious mood:

O sacred liberty, with how little devotion do men come into thy temples when they cannot bestow upon thee too much honour! Thy embracements are more delicate than those of a young bride with her lover, and to be divorced from them is half to be damned. For what else is a prison but the very next door to Hell? It is a man's grave, in which he walks alive. It is a sea, where he is always shipwrecked. It is a lodging built out of the world. It is a wilderness where all that wander up and down grow wild, and all that come into it are devoured. It is an unsatiable gulf, a fathomless whirlpool, an everlasting scaffold on which men go daily to execution. It is the cave where horror dwells; it is a bed of

## Dekker his Dreame.

In which, beeing rapt with a Poeticall  
*Entbusasme*, the great Volumes of Heauen  
and Hell to Him were opened, in which he  
read many Wonderfull Things.

*Est Deus in Nobis, agitante, calefimus illo.*



LONDON,  
Printed by NICHOLAS OKES. 1620.

Title-page of Dekker's "Dreams," 1620

terror. No! no! It stands not next door to Hell, but it is Hell itself, for souls lie languishing and cannot die. The keepers of it are churlish, and so are devils; the officers of it tormentors, and what are torments? Goeth not a man therefore toward Hell when he is led to prison? For, alack! what are the comforts he meets there? His wife and children grieve him when he beholds them; his kinsfolk grow blind and cannot see him; his friends are stricken deaf and cannot hear his moans. They upon whose company he spent his coin and credit will not come near the sight of that cold harbour where he lies.

Miscellaneous  
writers

Of other miscellaneous writers of the Jacobean age we have not space to say much. Sir HENRY WOTTON and JOHN HALES were not professional



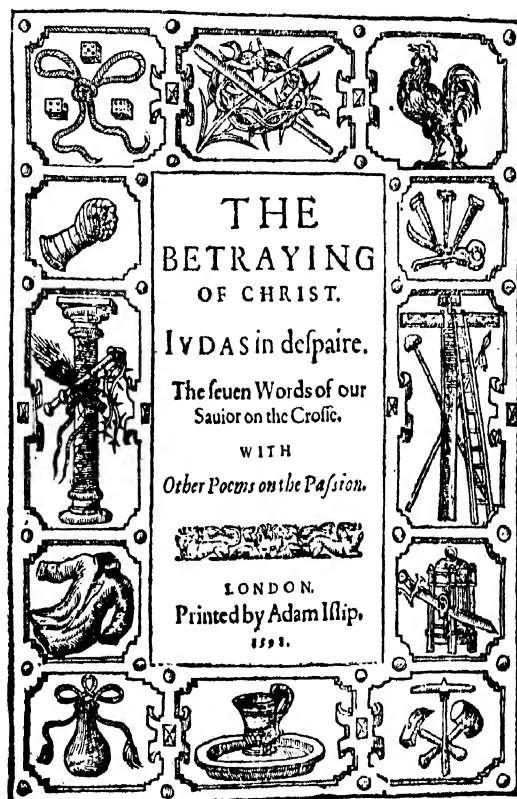
authors; they were exponents of the highest contemporary cultivation, who looked forward rather than backward, and by their comparative modernness of speech and liberality of view prophesied of future times of light and rest. Unlike in much, Wotton and Hales resembled one another in their quietism, their reluctance to seem emphatic, their delicate intellectual moderation. Each was distinguished by a life-long attachment to Eton.

**Sir Henry Wotton** (1568-1639) was born on April 9, 1568, at Boughton Hall, in Kent. After being carefully educated at Winchester and Oxford, he devoted himself to the diplomatic career, settling ultimately in Venice as ambassador. On his retirement from the foreign service, in 1623, Wotton was made Provost of Eton College, and lived there until his death at the close of 1639. His *Life* was written by Izaak Walton. The "ever-memorable"

**John Hales** (1584-1656) was born at Bath and educated at Oxford. He entered holy orders, and in 1613 was admitted a fellow of Eton College, being ejected and reduced to destitution in 1649. Hales died in great poverty on May 19, 1656, and was buried at Eton. He was greatly admired by those who knew him; Pearson said that Hales "was a most prodigious example of

an acute and piercing wit, of a vast and illimited knowledge, of a severe and profound judgment." He published very little during his lifetime, but three years after his death his *Golden Remains* were collected, consisting of his sermons and miscellaneous writings. Hales was so lucky in obtaining the rewards of scholarship and so cruelly persecuted for possessing them, that he was called "the happiest and the most unfortunate *helluo* of books" who ever lived.

The criticism of literature, which had formed an interesting, if imperfect, department of prose writing in the age of Elizabeth, was generally neglected in that of her successor. But at the beginning of the reign of James I. two poets crossed swords in a very important controversy. In 1602 Campion published *Observations in the Art of English Poesy*, the design of which was to



Title-page of Rowlands' "Betraying of Christ," 1598

*Criticism*

discourage the "vulgar and unartificial custom of rhyming." His idea was, as that of Spenser for a brief moment had been, to introduce into English unrhymed accentuated verse-forms. Campion was instantly answered by Daniel in his *Defence of Rhyme*, an able and elegant treatise commending the normal methods of English versification. Ben Jonson wrote a *Discourse of Poesy*, in which he contrived to contradict both Daniel and Campion, but unluckily this is lost. The success of Bacon's *Essays* gave rise to considerable imitation; the only specimens of this which are worthy even of mention are those published in 1600 and 1617 by Sir William Cornwallis.

Curiosities of literature abound in the Jacobean age, and none is more curious than the *Crudities* of THOMAS CORYAT (1577-1617), a book, as its title-page of 1611 tells us, "hastily gobbled up in five months' travels in France, Savoy, Italy, the Grisons, Switzerland, some parts of High Germany and the Netherlands, newly digested in the hungry air of Odcombe in the county of Somerset, and now dispersed to the nourishment of the travelling members of this kingdom." The "said travelling Thomas" went also to Turkey, Persia and India, dying at Surat in December 1617. He was absurd and feather-brained, but a quick observer and an entertaining, though prolix and affected writer. Another traveller, the poet George Sandys, published in 1615 an amusing relation of a journey to the Holy Land. Of purely technical treatises expressed in plain language for ordinary readers there were many published at this time. Among them the highly-coloured and agreeably written "vocations" of GERVASE MARKHAM (1568-1637) take a foremost place. He has been called "the earliest English hackney writer," and after having

essayed to excel in the higher branches of poetical and dramatic literature in his youth, he settled down to the production of books on agriculture,

Travels

1<sup>st</sup> August . 1599  
 Received of Mr Thomas Dekker at 9<sup>th</sup> Lane 6<sup>th</sup> of  
 Philip Humeblom 5<sup>th</sup> of June of the entry of 5<sup>th</sup> of June  
 1599 for 2<sup>nd</sup> of 1599  
 Thomas Dekker.

Facsimile receipt for 20s. from Dekker to Philip Henslowe  
 British Museum MSS 30,262

gardening, and the conduct of a household, which were extremely popular, and which now throw a most valuable light on the social life of the times. The cheerful chatty admonitions of Gervase Markham probably supply us with as close a reproduction as we possess of what the ordinary talk of educated persons was in the reigns of James I. and Charles I., and in this respect are safer guides than the emphatic scenes of the dramatists and the extravagant diatribes of the pamphleteers. The following sentences are taken from Markham's *Farewell to Husbandry* :

In the month of December put your sheep and swine to the peese-ricks, and fat them for the slaughter and market. Now kill your small porks and large bacons, lop hedges and trees, saw out your timber for building, and lay it to season ; and if your land be exceedingly stiff, and rise up in an extraordinary furrow, then in this month begin to plough up that ground whereon you mean to sow clean beans only. Now cover your dainty fruit-trees all over with canvas, and hide all your best flowers from frosts and storms with rotten old horse litter. Now drain all your corn-fields, and, as occasion shall serve, so water and keep moist your meadows. Now become the fowler with piece, nets and all manner of engine, for in this month no fish is out of season. Now fish for the carp, the bream, pike, trench, barbel, peel and salmon. And, lastly, for your health, eat meats that are hot and nourishing ; drink good wine that is neat, spirity, and lusty ; keep thy body well clad and thy house warm. Forsake whatsoever is phlegmatic, and banish all care from thy heart, for nothing is now more unwholesome than a troubled spirit.



Sir Henry Wotton

*After an original portrait*

The great interest in horticulture, too, produced a number of very charming herbals or garden-books, which possessed a certain literary importance. Of these the best was that produced in 1597 by John Gerard (1545-1612), the barber-surgeon, and completed after his death by T. Johnson in 1633. This is richly illustrated with accurate portraits of plants, and forms one of the most interesting and precious books of the Jacobean age

It is well to close our survey of the prose of this period with a brief account of the man in whom its intellectual character seems to be concentrated and sublimated. The central ambition of the prose-writers of the early seventeenth century in England was the collection of knowledge; they rested not from their "unwearied pain of gathering." The searching after antiquities, the



Title-page of the "Cradities," 1611

*With portrait of Coryat*

collation of authorities, the branding of imposture, the rectification of records, these were the most passionate occupations of intellectual men. It must always be recognised that the genuine love of James I. for books and the knowledge that resides in books, mightily spurred on the zeal of his subjects. To be a scholar was a fashionable employment; it was to be like the King; so that Bacon was not speaking an idle word when, in *The Advancement of*

*Learning*, he praised "the perfection of your Majesty's learning, which as a phoenix might call whole vollies of wits to follow you." The greatest of these "wits," a man of colossal acquirements and singularly noble character, was JOHN SELDEN, before whom all the scholars of the Jacobean age bowed down as to their "monarch in letters."

But, although Selden was one of the first men of his time, a giant of erudition and of policy, he was not a great writer of English. In this, too, he was typical of his time. He stood for the past, not for the future. His aim was, in view of the fragility of life, to allow as little knowledge as possible to die with a man; he had no care to add by the creative art to the sum of what would give pleasure to future generations. His *Titles of Honour* starts before the Flood, and his *History of Tithes* goes back to the "prorogations" of Melchisedek. He was the first authority of his age on jurisprudence; he stood in the forefront of Europe in the study of Anglo-Saxon, of the oriental languages, of Talmudic law,—but why should we specify, since he was "of stupendous learning in all kinds and in all languages"? Yet Clarendon, who worshipped him, was obliged to admit that, in the particular of writing English, Selden was "harsh and obscure," and, further, that he was typical of the scholars of his age in "a little undervaluing the beauty of a style and too much propensity to the language of antiquity." His disdain has been fatal to his influence. Selden had no faith in the power of the English language and no enthusiasm for its cultivation. The result is that a man whose whole life was spent with books, and who had one of the most stupendous minds of the century, is hardly included among English authors at all. Of his ponderous works, the only important examples which are not in Latin are the two technical treatises which have already been mentioned, and it is noticeable that the

# COVNTREY

## Contentments,

IN TWO BOOKES:

The first, containing the whole art of riding  
*great Horses in every short time, with the breeding, breaking, dyeting and ording of them, and of running, hunting and ambling Horses, with the manner how to use them in their traueell.*

Likewise in two newe Treatises the arts of hunting,  
*hawking, coursing of Grey-hounds with the lawes of the laesb, Shooting, Bowling, Tennis, Balloone &c.*

By G. M.

*The Second intituled,*

## The English Huswife:

*Containing the inward and outward vertues which ought to be in a compleate Woman: as her Philosophie, Cookery, Banqueting-Ruffe, Distillation, Perfumes, Wooll, Hemp, Flaxe, Dairies, Brewing, Baking, and all other things belonging to an Houehold.*

A worke very profitable and necessary for the generall good of this kingdome.

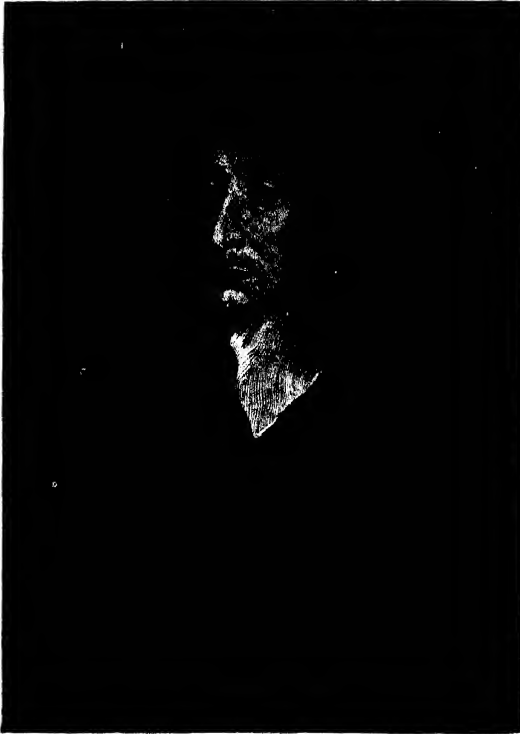
*Auncient serminal.*

Printed at London by I. B. for R. Jackson, and are to be sold at his shop neere Fleet-street Conduitt. 1619.

Title-page of Markham's "Coun'try Contentments," 1615

book which bears the name of Selden and is best known to readers, that collection of his *Table Talk*, where, as Coleridge said, he makes "every accident an outlet and a vehicle of wisdom," was actually put down in the language of a slightly later age by his secretary, Richard Milward (1609-1680), and is far simpler in style than any undoctored specimen of Selden's prose.

**John Selden** (1584-1654) was the son of a minstrel at West Tarring, in Sussex, where he was born on December 16, 1584. He was taught in the Free School of



**John Selden**

*After the portrait in the National Portrait Gallery*

Chichester and at Hart Hall, Oxford. In 1602 he came up to London to study the law, and became acquainted with Sir Robert Cotton, who employed him to copy records and trained him to be an antiquary. In 1613 we find him annotating Drayton's *Polyolbion*, and intimate with Jonson and Browne. His *Titles of Honour* was published in 1614, and his *History of Tithes* in 1618; the latter was suppressed at the King's command. Later, Selden took a very prominent part in legislative reform, and was imprisoned on several occasions. In 1630, after one of these confinements, he withdrew, to recruit his health, to the Earl of Kent's house at Wrest, which now became his residence. His later career belongs to political and legal history. After the Earl of Kent died, in 1639, Selden continued

to reside at Wrest, and according to Aubrey was secretly married to the Countess, who left him her property when she died in 1651. We are told that Selden had "a long nose inclining to one side, a full popping eye"; that his conversation was of an astonishing fulness, but not so agreeable to listen to as it would have been had his mind been less charged with knowledge, for "his memory at every moment tripped up his speech." Selden was a prodigious collector of MSS., and 8000 of his volumes are now in the Bodleian Library. He died at his house of White Fryars on November 30, 1654.

From the *Table Talk*, where "the sense and motion are wholly Selden's, and most of the words," we may quote some sentences about Pleasure :

Pleasure is nothing else but the intermission of pain, the enjoying of something I am in great trouble for till I have it.

'Tis a wrong way to proportion other men's pleasures to ourselves; 'tis like a little child using a little bird, "O poor bird, thou shalt sleep with me"; so lays it in his bosom, and stifles it with his hot breath: the bird had rather be in the cold air. And yet too 'tis the most pleasing flattery, to like what other men like.

'Tis most undoubtedly true, that all men are equally given to their pleasure; only thus, one man's pleasure lies one way, and another's another. Pleasures are all alike simply considered in themselves: he that hunts, or he that governs the Commonwealth, they both please themselves alike, only we commend that, whereby we ourselves receive some benefit; as if a man place his delight in things that tend to the common good. He that takes pleasure to hear sermons, enjoys himself as much as he that hears plays; and could he that loves plays endeavour to love sermons, possibly he might bring himself to it as well as to any other pleasure. At first it may seem harsh and tedious, but afterwards 'twould be pleasing and delightful. So it falls out in that which is the great pleasure of some men, tobacco; at first they could not abide it, and now they cannot be without it.

Whilst you are upon Earth, enjoy the good things that are here (to that end were they given), and be not melancholy, and wish yourself in heaven. If a king should give you the keeping of a castle, with all things belonging to it, orchards, gardens, &c., and bid you use them; withal promise you that, after twenty years to remove you to the Court, and to make you a Privy Counsellor; if you should neglect your castle, and refuse to eat of those fruits, and sit down, and whine, and wish you were a Privy Counsellor, do you think the King would be pleased with you?

**Table-Talk:**

BEING THE

**DISCOURSES**

OF

**John Selden Esq;**

OR HIS

**S E N C E**

Of Various

**M A T T E R S**

OF

**WEIGHT and High CONSEQUENCE**

Relating especially to

**Religion and State.**

---

*Distingue Tempora.*

---

L O N D O N,

Printed for E. Smith, in the Year MDC LXXXIX.

Title-page of Selden's "Table-Talk," 1689











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